A PSYCHODYNAMIC SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE ON COMMAND
RELATIONSHIP DURING COMBAT OPERATIONS

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The purpose of this research thesis is to provide new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of the command relationship between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile environments. The thesis focuses on how subconscious processes influence the command relationship, and ultimately, how those processes contribute to the spectra of conflicts between the company level and battlegroup level

To that end, this thesis utilizes three different theories within psychodynamic system theory to analyzing interviews and questionnaires to identify perceived problem areas within the subconscious domain and their effects on the command relationship.

The analysis of the empirical data has given an understanding of how subconscious processes influence command relations and as shown how the leadership roles of boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological process have influenced the command relationship in a variety of ways. It has also shown how splitting and projection have led to conflicts and subsequent breakdown of the command relationship. Overall this thesis has unmistakably shown that subconscious processes do play a role in the breakdown of command relationship, and thus have provided new insight to one the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges**.**

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

A PSYCHODYNAMIC SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE ON COMMAND, RELATIONSHIP DURING COMBAT OPERATIONS, by Major Dennis Weidemann Hejlesen, 111 pages.

The purpose of this research thesis is to provide new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of the command relationship between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile environments. The thesis focuses on how subconscious processes influence the command relationship, and ultimately, how those processes contribute to the spectra of conflicts between the company level and battlegroup level

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First and foremost I would like to thank my wife Simone Weidemann Hejlesen for her devotion and support throughout this project. Without your support this project would have never been realized. Your patience and understanding throughout the year have been admirable.

Finally I will have to beg the forgiveness of my two boys for spending so little time with them while working on this thesis. I hope that you will one day be old enough to understand the reasons behind.

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ACRONYMS

ADRP   Army Doctrine Reference Publication

CIMIC   Civilian Military Cooperation

TOC   Tactical Operations Center

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research thesis is to provide new insight to one of the Danish

Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of the command relationship

between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile

environments. The thesis focuses on how subconscious processes influence the command

relationship, and ultimately, how those processes contribute to the spectra of conflicts

between the company level and battlegroup level, and thus the breakdown of the

command relationship. To that end, this thesis utilizes three different theories within

psychodynamic system theory to analyzing interviews and questionnaires to identify

perceived problem areas within the subconscious domain and their effects on the

command relationship.

Introduction

"Immediately after returning from deployment, my worst experience was seeing

one of my soldiers being badly wounded . . . however in retrospect it was more the

confrontations we had with the staff."[1]

The occurrence of conflicts and confrontations in organizations is a well-known

phenomenon, and as such is also a phenomenon that characterizes military organizations.

Although the challenges faced by military leaders and military organizations during

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[1] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016. All Interviews were confidential; the names of the Interviewees are withheld by mutual consent.

deployment and combat operations are unlike any other experienced by the typical

organizational leader. The efforts of continued combat engagements puts tremendous

stress on both organization and its leaders, which in turn raises the requirement for

leaders to excel at every aspect of leadership, to include building relations and mutual

trust to prevent conflicts and create a healthy command climate based on mission

command.[2] However, leaders do not always succeed in this task, and when they fail it,

can have severe consequences with the potential loss of life as a direct result.

The statement presented above during the interview with Leader 1 is far from

unique. In fact, it has been the subject of much debate amongst junior officers to a degree

which led a large group of junior officers taking the perceived problems, and the lack of

solution presented by senior officers, public with a newspaper article presented in

Berlingske.[3] In the article 53 officers present their views of the problem from a

subordinate unit perspective. The primary cause of the problem is mentioned as a lack of

understanding for the operational environment that subunits are operating under and the

tasks they solve, and a lack of relations between the commander and subordinate units

under his direct command. That article formed a cornerstone in a debate on relations

between commanders and subordinate units during combat operations, and showed that

the problem was far more common and had broader consequences than many had

previously believed.

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[2] Danish Defense, *Forsvarets Ledelsesgrundlag* (Copenhagen: Danish Defense Publications, April 2008), 15-18.

[3] 53 officers. "Er du mand nok til at være chef?"*, Berlingske*, April 4, 2012, accessed November 6, 2016, http://www.b.dk/kommentarer/er-du-mand-nok-til-at-vaere-chef.

Participating in international operations as part of either a conflict prevention or humanitarian relief initiative under the United Nations or collective defense operations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has become the Danish Armies raison d´etre.[4] Although the number of units deployed has varied from year to year, it has been a given fact that the Danish Army has had between 300 and 2500 soldiers deployed at any given time throughout the last 15 years.[5] Considering the actual size of the Danish Army, roughly 7000, the high number of soldiers deployed means that every professional soldier has a high probability of having been deployed at least once, and most several times. It is therefore especially disconcerting that a number of officers seemingly find, that issues relating to the command relationship between subunits and higher headquarters have been evident and present throughout deployments to a degree that influences the command climate enough for them to write an article in a public newspaper. It is the objective of this thesis to further research this specific problem area and devise ways to mitigate the problem or at least raise awareness.

<u>Problem Statement</u>

The problem statement for this research thesis is: To provide new insight on one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges on command relationship, in order to understand how subconscious processes, contribute to the breakdown of command relationships during combat deployments between two levels of command.

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[4] Danish Defense, "Army tasks," accessed October 19, 2016, http://www2.for svaret.dk/omos/organisation/haeren/Pages/Opgaver.aspx.

[5] Danish Defense, "International deployments," accessed October 19, 2016, http://www2.forsvaret.dk/viden-om-opgaver/kort/Pages/kort-over-opgaver.aspx.

Deploying soldiers in international conflicts has proven to be very demanding on both the personnel and the resources needed for completing operational tasks, therefore effective leadership North Atlantic Treaty Organization has become the Danish Armies raison d´etre.[6] Although the number of units deployed has varied from year to year, it has been a given fact that the Danish Army has had between 300 and 2500 soldiers deployed at any given time throughout the last 15 years.[7] a leader faces under such conditions are many and varied, they can however be divided into the two major components[8] of external and internal factors. The external factors are characterized by the demands and requirements put on an organization by higher formations, and by the risks external adversaries and environmental factors poses to an organization. The external factors or external inputs present the leader with a unique set leadership challenges, while the internal factors present another set of challenges. The internal factors are seen to primarily be founded in the friction generated between different levels of command when issuing tasks and purposes to be carried out in a stress full environment like combat. Many of the internal friction generating factors are believed to take place in the subconscious realm, and are therefore inherently hard to directly observe. However, the product of these frictions can be observed and analyzed through prudent methodology.

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[6] Danish Defense, "Army tasks," accessed October 19, 2016, http://www2.for svaret.dk/omos/organisation/haeren/Pages/Opgaver.aspx.

[7] Danish Defense, "International deployments," accessed October 19, 2016, http://www2.forsvaret.dk/viden-om/opgaver/kort/Pages/kort-over-opgaver.aspx.

[8] Ibid., 16-17.

Collectively the external and internal factors present a very stressful environment for leaders to operate in. Therefore, the leaders function as a guardian or manager on the boundary between the external factors and internal factors becomes very critical for an organizations ability to function during combat operations, it is therefore the aim of this thesis to help understand the finer workings of the organizational leader in his boundary function from a subconscious perspective.

Background

In order to fully appreciate the scope of this research, it is necessary to have a certain pre-understanding and background knowledge of how military forces operate and how units and individuals act within the military hierarchy. The Danish Army is in many ways unique compared to civilian organizations, and indeed the same argument could be made for most military forces, and as such has its own set of values and norms that define the culture of the organization. Therefore, this research features a number of specific military terms and problems, which are recognizable for the military professional, but not necessarily by individuals without prior experience with the military world. However, this does not mean that the research presented in this thesis holds no value to organizational leaders at large, only that the findings might be less accessible for the non-military professional. The research presented by this thesis is done by a military professional to address a specific warfighting challenge by the Danish Army, and as such is primarily written for the military professional with the appropriate background to fully understand and appreciate the findings in a military context.

As a military leader in the armed forces, we are trained to follow a hierarchy of authority known as the chain of command. The top of this hierarchy disseminates

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guidance, orders, objectives, policies, directives and tasks to subordinates, who in turn

process them in to new orders for their subordinates, in other words tasks are

operationalized. A cliché about the military world is that orders are given and

subordinates follow them in an automated robotic way, without further thought, analysis

or questions. However, this is not necessarily so. Military leaders in the Danish Army are

trained in the use of mission command, a philosophy that places emphasis on the use of

guidance and vision, the commander´s intent, and mission orders to enable disciplined

initiative by subordinates to carry out the commander´s intent.[9] [10] Rather than giving very

specific orders, military leaders rely on framing the problem and giving a clear vision of

the required end state to be achieved whilst, balancing the unity of effort with subordinate

commanders' freedom of action. Ergo, keeping a centralized intent, while dispersing

execution through disciplined initiative. Mission Command thus requires mutual trust and

understanding between commanders at all levels.

<div align="center">Primary Research Question</div>

The research portrayed in this thesis answers the following primary research

question by means of social constructivist methodology and qualitative empirical data.

The methodology and operational approach is described in chapter 3. The primary

research question is:

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[9] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, May 2012), 1-5 – 1-7.

[10] Danish Defense Academy, *Feltreglement 1* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Defense Academy, May 2007), 1-8-3.

How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat operations?

Secondary Research Questions

In support of the primary research question, this study makes use of three secondary research questions, each of which from a theoretical perspective, will highlight different aspects of the primary research question. The three secondary research questions are:

1. How do the subconscious processes of boundary regulations, problem solving and pathological processes according to theorist Bent Jørgensen effect the command relationship?

2. How do the subconscious processes of projecting, splitting, idealism and devaluation according to theorist Anne Mette Hasselager effect the command relationship?

3. How do the subconscious processes of dependency, fight or flight and pairing according theorist Wilfred Bion effect the command relationship?

Theory and Methodology

The following is a short presentation of the theory and methodology used to answer the thesis research questions. One of the foundations of the Danish Army and armed forces in general is our ability to function in a group, be it at the very basic squad level when we enter the army or later in staff´s. As leaders, we are taught to build unit cohesion and lead groups towards a common objective or end state, a task that basically

doesn't change depending on level, it only changes in scope. The focus of the thesis is on how we as leaders of different groups within the organization work together via task orders and purpose to reach a common objective, and how brake down of command relationship leads to failure in this task.

Theory

To the casual observer looking in from outside, it might appear that everyone is working comprehensively towards the same ends or objectives. However, this might not always be the case, venture deeper in to how an organization based on groups of individuals with their respective leaders cooperates/collaborates and it becomes clearer that there are two levels at play; the conscious and the subconscious. The conscious level is from the author's perspective seen to be relatively well understood. There are numerous publications like field manuals, standard operating procedures and staff manuals describing how the leaders of these groups are supposed to work together, even the hierarchy of the army is designed to aid cooperation and provide visual symbols of authority.

As it is the purpose of this thesis to provide a new perspective on the breakdown of command relationship between the leaders of these groups, it becomes apparent that the focus should be on the less understood level, the subconscious. The research of this aspect of the problem requires utilization of theories that give an explanatory approach to processes, which are taking place at the subconscious level. For this purpose, the theories developed within the psychodynamic realm of science, and more specific the psychodynamic systems theory, would be suited to describe and understand processes related to the subconscious level in an organization. Comparing the problem statement

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and research question it becomes apparent the focus point for this thesis should be on interpersonal dynamics and how conflicts, primarily at the subconscious level, arise and create problems for the command relationship within an organization. Therefore, the theoretical field for the thesis must provide tools for analyzing and understanding this very specific research field. Psychodynamic system theories again provide exactly that, a very well developed system of terms and indicators for understanding process in organizations at the subconscious level.

Methodology

By overserving the area of conflict between two organizational levels within an organization, in this case between company and battlegroup level, this thesis provides an empirical based analysis of potential problem areas within the subconscious realm. The primary methodology to provide understanding of the empirical collections presented in this thesis is the social constructivist paradigm. According to Dr. John W. Creswell, Professor of Family Medicine and Co-Director of Michigan Mixed Methods Research and Scholarship Program at the University of Michigan, a Social Constructivist believes that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences."[11] By utilizing the social constructivist perspective, it is possible to understand the social interactions between individual leaders at two different levels of an organization, and by analyzing their

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[11] John W Creswell, *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Saga, 2014), 8.

subjective experiences to objectively try and understand if subconscious process play a role in the degradation of command relationship over time.

To answer the research question, the need for collecting empirical data from leaders who have been deployed to combat operations and have operated at two different levels of command, in this case company and battlegroup levels become paramount for the validity of the analysis. These base group of people are considered the primary sources for the purpose of the research thesis.

To answer whether or not subconscious processes play a role in the breakdown of command relationship, the empirical background would have to be collected from units where breakdown of command relationship has been evident throughout the deployment. To identify the relevant units, the best source of information is from either the end of tour reports written by the units themselves or from the after-action evaluation reports and the lessons learned and lessons identified reports written by independent observers from the Army Combat School. Once the units where problems have been evident have been identified, the next natural course of action would be to collect empirical data from as many leaders as possible. The primary empirical collection method for this thesis are anonymous interviews with company commander and battlegroup staff and commanders. Secondarily empirical data has been collected via questionnaires sent out to the same target group of people. The secondary collection method was necessitated by the geographical spread of the primary sources and the author´s limited resources to travel for interviews and the sources time for conducting interviews. For the purpose of this thesis interviews and questionnaires conducted with battlegroups staff and commanders

are label with letters, whereas interviews and questionnaires with company commanders are labeled with numbers. All labels are in random order to keep sources anonymous.

The empirical collection is qualitative in nature as each deployed team only has a handful of officers who would fit the previous mentioned criteria for primary sources. The low number of potential primary sources and the derived impossibility to utilize quantitative research methodology should however, not impede the credibility of this thesis. The empirical data needed to answers the research question, calls for the author to fully capture the complex situation under which the leaders have been operating and what lead to the gradual breakdown of the command relationship. To capture details on that level, qualitative interviews is the best approach, as it allows the interviewee to tell the story from his or her perspective with the full range of emotions and details. Even if the subconscious processes will not directly be revealed by this method, as subconscious proses are inherently difficult to observe directly, interviews should give the best foundation for identifying some of the indicators of subconscious processes.

Chapters 2 and 3 give further in-depth description of the theoretical foundation and the methodology used for answering the research questions.

<u>Assumptions</u>

This thesis is based on some key assumptions which serve as a back ground for the analysis conducted during this research thesis:

1. Sources used for this thesis did not lie about their experiences or tried purposefully to discredit members of the teams they were deployed with. This baseline assumption has to be accepted in general otherwise the validity of the analysis presented in chapter four will be without value. In order to secure this

validity, all sources are kept anonymous to both protect them and encourage free speech. Also, sources are kept unaware of other participants.

2. To appreciate the validity of the findings presented in this research thesis it is necessary to acknowledge the link between individual subconscious psychology as pioneered by Dr. Sigmund Freud, the renown Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, and psychodynamic system theory which expands upon those principles to include organizational psychology.

3. Conflicts and frustrations are universal problems sets that exist in all organization to a smaller or larger degree.

<u>Personal Biases</u>

As the predominant perspective of this thesis is that of social constructivism and critical thinking in general, it becomes paramount to reflect on the author´s own role as both the researcher and a member of the Danish Army, and how this could impact the findings and perspectives taken in this thesis. Having been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq and trained numerous detachments for the same deployments, the author of this research thesis has himself felt and experienced the problems relating to breakdown of command relationship and how it affects not only the command climate but also the ability to solve mission tasks. This has given the author a unique knowledge and understanding of the problem, having been positioned both inside a unit, and been the commander of units training for deployments utilizing end of tour reports to improve training. However, at the same time, it also presents some difficulties for the author, as it puts him in a position where subjectivity can be difficult to maintain, due to prior influences and experiences within the environment. It is the aim of this author to utilize

and draw from his expertise in a positive way, to validate and analyze empirical data, to try and give a genuine new insight into the problem area pertaining to breakdown of command relationship during combat operations.

Limitations and Delimitations

The scope of this research thesis is limited to battlegroups of the Danish Army deployed to either Afghanistan or Iraq between 2010 and 2015. It will not deal with the complexities of multinational relations and working under a shared command and control relation between Danish Army Staff and being as a subordinate unit to a British Brigade. Although the multinational aspect would be interesting, it is the view of this researcher that this would present an entirely new problem set worthy of its own research thesis. The reasons for focusing on deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan only are twofold. First, it is the wish of this researcher to deal with situations that presents an organization with the maximum amount of stress and pressure. This is based on the understanding of subconscious processes being far more likely to present under those circumstances. Secondly, it is the accessibility of data to help select deployment teams to focus on, since end of tour reports are more detailed the larger the contingent deployed and the more risk involved, reports from teams deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan are much more detailed then teams deployed to Kosovo. The end of tour reports also represent of the limitations that this research thesis had to work with since all reports are classified they could not directly be utilized for this thesis. They have however indirectly been used to select teams were conflicts were reported.

The limitation on time in form of only dealing with teams deployed from 2010 to 2015 is purely based on the researchers wish to keep the result of the thesis current.

Another aspect is availability of sources and how well they remember specific episodes during deployments.

Definitions

Battlegroup level: This expression is used throughout the thesis to cover all members of the battlegroup level. For the purpose of this thesis sources from the battlegroup level includes acting chiefs of staff from section 1 to 9, as well as chiefs of staff, deputy commanders and battlegroup commanders.

Command relationship: For the purpose of this thesis command relationship is the prudent relationship between commanders that makes them capable of communicating effectively and solving tasks. As such, it is not restricted to purely being a professional relationship but also meaningful personal relationship.

Ira Chaleff, one of the lead researches in the field of followership and the founder and president of Executive Coaching and Consulting Associates, defines the importance of this relationship in the 2001 article "Courageous Followers, Courageous Leaders": "It is the quality of the relationship of leaders and followers, all the way up and down the organization chart, that makes or breaks organizations."[12] The meaning being that the quality of this relationship is ultimately what makes an organization successful in achieving their main task.

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[12] Executive Coaching and Consulting Associates, "Courageous Followers, Courageous Leaders," accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.exe-coach.com/courageous-followers-courageous-leaders.htm.

Company level: This expression is used throughout the thesis to cover all members of company level organizations. For the purpose of this thesis, sources from the company level includes company commanders and platoon commanders.

Main task: The term main task is used repeatedly throughout this research thesis, and for the purpose of this thesis it is defined as the primary or overarching task that an organization must solve, it thus becomes the very purpose for the organization itself to solve this task, otherwise it becomes absolute. Putting it to the context for this thesis it would be the answer to why the battlegroup is deployed in the first place and what task it has to solve in order to be success. A pivot point for this thesis is that conscious efforts on the part of the group members will be in pursuit of the main task, while at the same time there are often unconscious hidden agendas that interfere with the completion of the main task.

Mission Command: "Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations. Mission command calls for leaders with the ability to build a collaborative environment, the commitment to develop subordinates, the courage to trust, the confidence to delegate, the patience to overcome adversity, and the restraint to allow lower echelons to develop the situation."[13]

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[13] Headquarters Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, August 2012), 1-19.

Significance of the Study

This research thesis is significant to the military profession as I will try to provide a new insight into one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the deterioration of command relationship during prolonged combat deployments between subordinates and higher headquarters. The warfighting challenge has been set forth due to several end of tour reports mentioning severe levels of distrust between company level units and battlegroup level headquarters, which culminated in a newspaper article written by 53 captains and lieutenants criticizing their senior officers for lack of confidence and trust.[14]

This research is significant for non-military scholars as the problems areas identified would be applicable to civilian organizations working in high stress, high performance environments as well, due to the fact that the theories employed for my analysis pertains to the human psyche in general and not a per say military perspective.

Summary

This qualitative research thesis provides new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges on the breakdown of command relationship between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile environments. The thesis does so by utilizing three different theories within psychodynamic system theory to analyzing interviews and questionnaires to identify perceived problem areas within the subconscious domain in an effort to answer the main research question: How do

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[14] 53 officers. "Er du mand nok til at være chef?"*, Berlingske*, April 4, 2012, accessed November 6, 2016, http://www.b.dk/kommentarer/er-du-mand-nok-til-at-vaere-chef.

subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and

battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat

operations?

In support of the primary research question, this study will make use of three

secondary research questions related to the three theoretical directions:

How do the subconscious processes of boundary regulations, problem solving and

pathological processes according to theorist Bent Jørgensen effect the command

relationship?

How do the subconscious processes of projecting, splitting, idealism and

devaluation according to theorist Anne Mette Hasselager effect the command

relationship?

How do the subconscious processes of dependency, fight or flight and pairing

according theorist Wilfred Bion effect the command relationship?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a detailed overview of the

theories used as a foundation for the analysis of the research materiel presented in chapter

4, in an effort to answer the main research question;

How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and

battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat

operations?

A preliminary study of pervious work conducted to answer the warfighting

challenge reveals that numerous studies have been conducted based on the principles of

mission command which have all focused on well-known and conscious processes

already widely accepted and employed throughout the Danish Defense.[15] Several other

studies have utilized the theories of Dr. Edgar Schein, known for his numerous

publications on organizational culture, process consultation, research process, career

dynamics, and perhaps most noticeably for his research on organizational learning and

change process,[16] to highlight some of the sub-conscious processes influencing the

command relationship within the Danish Defense. As it is the purpose of this thesis to

provide new insight in to the war fighting challenge pertaining to command relationship

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[15] Danish Defense Academy, "Research database," Danish Defense, accessed November 9, 2016, http://pure.fak.dk/portal/da/.

[16] Ibid.

and how it deteriorates during prolonged combat operations, the point of view for this thesis would have to take a new theoretical direction from previous studies conducted by the defense academy.

This chapter therefore introduces the reader to psychodynamic system theory developed by one of the founding fathers of modern psychology, Dr. Sigmund Freud and three peers within the theory, that each represents a different point of view and interpretation of the classic psychodynamic system theory.

<u>Psychodynamic System Theory</u>

Psychodynamic system theory has its origins in the theories of Dr. Sigmund Freud, perhaps most well-known for his research in psychodynamics of the individual and the development of the Id and Ego theories. According to Freud, the human psyche can be divided into three parts; Id, ego and super ego. His 1923 publication *The Ego and the Id* saw all three divisions fully developed for the first time, as a supplement to his previous creation of the conscious, unconscious and preconscious mind.[17]

Psychodynamic system theory builds on those considerations, and applies them to an organizational perspective. When observing how organizations work, a superficial assumption would be to assess the organization as the sum of the individuals within it. That is however not necessarily true, as pointed out by Annemette Hasselager, a noteworthy Danish organizational psychologist, with numerous publications on organizational psychology pertaining got defensive mechanisms, and Kurt Lewin, renowned German-American psychologist working primarily with group behavior, that

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[17] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (Hogarth Press), 7, 23.

state that groups can also be defined, as a separate entity under its own right, with the same range of responses that would characterize an individual. Another renowned psychologist Wilfred Bion also verified that groups can become an entity on its own, forcing individuals with in, to comply with the groups basic assumptions:

> Group mentality is the unanimous expression of the will of the group, contributed to by the individual in ways of which he is unaware, influencing him disagreeably whenever he thinks or behaves in a manner at variance with the basic assumptions. It is thus a machinery of intercommunication that is designed to ensure that group life is in accordance with the basic assumptions.[18]

Following this train of thought, it becomes clear that just as individuals have two levels they may operate on simultaneously; the conscious and the subconscious, so too does groups and organizations. Hasselager uses the terms task oriented level and psychodynamic level to differentiate between the conscious and subconscious level for organizations, whereas other theorists like Bion uses the terms; work group and basic assumption group, to describe the two levels. Even though there are debates amongst psychodynamic theorists on which terms to use, the bottom line that they agree on is the that groups can act at the conscious and subconscious level. For the purpose of this thesis the terms used will be task oriented and psychodynamic level.

As a general observation of groups acting at the task oriented level, the conscious level, individuals within a group will work rationally towards solving the main task. At the psychodynamic level however, the group is dominated by irrational processes were feelings, fantasies and fictional scenarios take precedence over rational and logical processes. At any one time both individuals and groups can operate at both levels, with

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[18] Wilfred Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961), 65.

emphasis on either one or the other level. When the group as a whole or individuals on their own, work at the task oriented level, work as a whole progresses well; the focus of the group is predominantly aimed at problem solving in relation to the main task, and not on interpersonal relations and plots. However, if the group or individuals within the group degrade to working predominantly at the psychodynamic level, the focus is subconsciously twisted away from the main task. The group becomes consumed with irrational processes that can include; working towards their own perceived main task, paranoia, decisions made on feelings alone, interpersonal paranoid derived from unclear human relations. The reasons for this degradation can take many forms but are normally a reaction to some of the following circumstances; external pressure, operating environment, unclear main task, defuse tasking to individuals, roles and functions within the group and boundaries between the group and the external organization. In conclusion, psychodynamic system theory can be visually represented as the two operating levels of the group with an external boundary to the surrounding environment with inputs and outputs regulated by the leader.
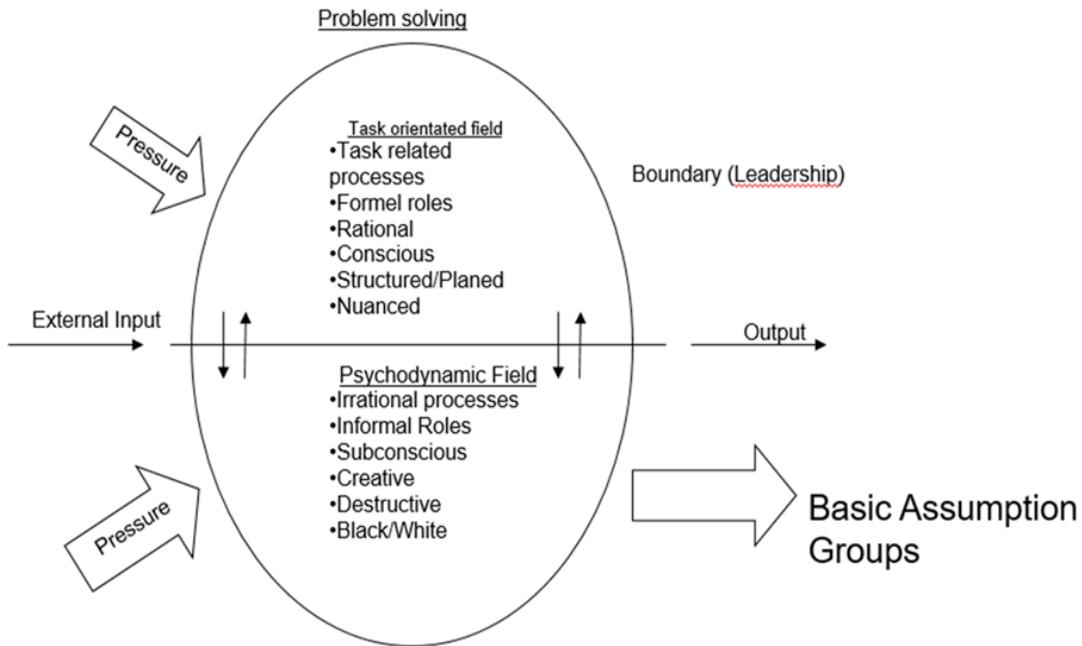
Figure 1.   Psychodynamic System Model

Source: Created by author.

In the following three renowned psychologists, each working with different
perspectives of psychodynamic system theory will be presented. Bent Jørgensen
primarily works with the leader's role in the process pertaining to boundary regulation,
problem solving and pathological processes. Annemette Hasselager´s point of view is that
of defensive mechanisms and how projection, splitting, idolizing and devaluation
influences group behavior. The last theorist is Wilfred Bio who has worked extensively
with groups acting at the psychodynamic level, and how the group mechanisms of
pairing, fight or flight and dependencies influences the group's ability to operate and
problem solve.

<u>Bent Jørgensen</u>

Bent Jørgensen is a renowned Danish organizational psychologist with several popular publications on the how organizations work at the conscious and subconscious level and how they interrelate with each other. He graduated from Copenhagen University as Cand. Psych. in 1977 and has since primarily worked with organizational psychology for private and governmental organizations. Bent Jørgensen has in particular worked with how organizational leadership in the modern society, interacts with group dynamics and how leaders can influence the effectives of an organization, by being more aware of subconscious processes. For the purpose of describing how a leader can view his own role in a group or organization at the subconscious level, Bent Jørgensen works with three specific leadership roles within psychodynamic system theory; boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological processes. For the purpose of this thesis these three roles will be used to analyze the leadership perspective of subconscious processes and how they relate to the breakdown of command relationship.

Boundary regulations

> In order to get a group or organization to solve their primary tasks, it is necessary to organize, guide and control many complex and complicated subtasks in a comprehensive way, in order for organization to problem solve effectively [translated by author].[19]

Getting an organization to function and work toward is main task in a comprehensive manner, is the responsibility of the leadership. In order to facilitate and

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[19] Bent Jørgensen, *Psykodynamiske perspektiver på ledelse, i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi – på arbejde under overfladen* (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2004, 1. Udgave), 163.

control this process leaders have different roles that they have to fulfill. According to

Bent Jørgensen one of the more important roles that a leader has to fulfill is that of

boundary regulation.[20] In psychodynamic system theory, the leader is the entity that

preforms the role of boundary regulation between subordinates and the surrounding

environment. The surrounding environment in this case can include everything from tasks

given by higher formation, actions taken by adversaries to challenges and stress presented

by operating in austere environments.

The leader´s boundary regulation role act as a filter through which all information

must pass on its way either in or out of an organization or group. Boundary regulation is a

very difficult balancing act to get right, and as a leader navigates this balance, there is a

risk of favoring either one or the other side of the boundary, giving course to concern,

anxieties or dissatisfaction, it therefore becomes imperative for a leader to pay attention

to how the environment influences subordinates and vice versa.

<div align="center">Problem solving</div>

A different aspect that Bent Jørgensen works with is the leader's role in driving a

group or organization towards a common main task, making sure that all resources within

the organization are devoted to working together to achieve the main task. Not only does

the leader have to drive the process, but in the absence of a clear main task he may be

forced to derive one himself to focus an organizations efforts, even though this might

bring about a different set of problems as self-derived main tasks may not necessarily line

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[20] Ibid., 163.

up with high formations main task or perception thereof.[21] Creating a potential situation

for conflicts between to levels of command. As a result, the leader´s role in problem

solving is dual hatted, having to both actively communicate his vision for the main task

and guide his organization toward it. Failure in leadership to guide, direct or

communicate a clear and concise main task vision, can lead to subordinates losing focus

or working directly against the main task as they may revert to coming up with their own

main task, in lack of a clear vision.[22]

<center>Pathological Processes in an Organization</center>

The last role that Bent Jørgensen works with is pathological processes. According

to Bent Jørgensen. organizations can broadly be divided into two categories; the "good

enough" organization and the paranoia generating organization.[23] The good enough

organization is characterized by a healthy and comprehensive organizational structure

where the relationship between authority and responsibility, tasks and resources as well

as structure and tasks are balanced and transparent. The paranoia generating organization

is by contrast characterized by toxic leadership and non-transparent processes, which

prohibits normal relations between members of the organization, as relations are founded

on mistrust, hostility and anxiety. As an indicator that the command relationship is being

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[21] Jørgensen, *Psykodynamiske perspektiver på ledelse, i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi – på arbejde under overfladen*, 166.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 170.

influenced by paranoid generating processes, lack of clear main tasks, resources and task balance and or unclear chain of command would be some of the tell tales.

<center>Annemette Hasselager</center>

Offering a different point of view to Bent Jørgensen, Annemette Hasselager´s main focus is on defensive mechanisms, for the purpose of this thesis the main indicators that Hasselager works with will be analyzed and presented on their own, even though by their very nature they would often be present as a reaction to some of the roles that Bent Jørgensen works with. Thus, the purpose of introducing Annemette Hasselagers point of view is to establish if leaders exhibit signs of defensive mechanism being involved in the breakdown of command relationship. Annemette Hasselager is a noteworthy Danish organizational psychologist, with numerous publications on organizational psychology in the private sector. Hasselager graduated Cand. Psych. from Copenhagen University in 1993 and has since worked with employee mental welfare and organizational psychology specializing in defensive mechanisms as they pertain to group dynamics. Hasselager focuses on how social defensive mechanisms can be utilized to overcome some of the dilemmas and anxieties arising from working in an organization striving towards a common main task. To describe the subconscious processes at work, Hasselager defined three main indicators: projection, splitting and idealizing/devaluation that all characterizes how subconscious defensive mechanisms can be at work in an organization,

undermining the effort to work towards a common main task, and thus also undermining the command relationship.[24]

<div align="center">Projection</div>

With every human being on earth being unique in their own way, it also follows that every person has a unique way of looking at the surrounding environment, their own subjective way of looking at events and interpreting what they see through their own filters and biases. These mental filters are based on the accumulative sum of experiences each individual carry, and it is in this light that meaning is given to other people's reactions and motivation for acting in a certain way. Hasselager defines projection as a defensive mechanism, were a person's own subjective world view is forced upon a situation or as a motive for other people's behavior absent of objective reasoning.[25] For Projection this is especially true in situations where an individual is exposed to high levels of stress, anxiety or strong disagreement with the main task. To overcome this problem Hasselager, points toward courses of action a leader can take, failure to act under these circumstances will most likely worsen the problem. In order for a leader to successfully lead an organization exhibiting signs of projection towards the main task, a leader needs to fathom the stress, anxiety and disagreement within an organization and

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[24] Annemette Hasselager, *Lederskab og gruppens psykologi, i Lederskabelse – det personlige lederskab* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Samfunds litteratur, 2006, 2. Udgave), 161-174.

[25] Ibid., 168.

absorb and process them into to a more acceptable from, that inspires confidence in the main task, a process otherwise known as containment.[26]

Splitting

Annemette Hasselager defined splitting as a process where the individual starts thinking of situations in absolute terms, a person views the world in black or white and thinks of outcomes as all or nothing scenarios. Splitting thus becomes a failure to create synthesis between positive and negative qualities in one self and others into a cohesive and realistic world view.[27] In the context of this thesis however, how the process of splitting influences a group´s perception of motives and actions taken by other individuals or groups not belonging to the group within an organization, becomes the most interesting part. As with an individual influenced by the self defense mechanism of splitting, a group to lose the ability to see shades of gray, this leads to a group phenomenon that Annemette Hasselager refered to as us or them situations.[28] Leaders of groups, suffering from splitting, can if they are not aware of it create us or them scenarios leading groups to splitting. Typical observable behaviors of splitting, is that groups will tend to think that everything good that happens, is a product of their own activities, whereas bad or less desirable outcomes is always the fault of the external environment or external individuals. Utilizing this defensive mechanism both as a leader and in groups

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[26] Lars Holmgaard Nielsen, *"Lederskab i kamp"* (Master thesis, University of Roskilde, 2009), 21.

[27] Hasselager, *Lederskab og gruppens psykologi, i Lederskabelse – det personlige lederskab*, 168.

[28] Ibid., 170

brings a sense of simplification of the world, and thus makes it easier for a group to cope with their anxieties.

Idolizing and Devaluating

The third defensive mechanism that Annemette Hasselager worked with is idolizing and devaluation, these two mechanisms are normally linked to splitting but can be present on their own. Idolizing is a process, according to Annemette Hasselager, were the leader, being it the organizational leader or an informal leader, of an organization is put on a pedestal as the sole entity that will guarantee a successful task accomplishment.[29] In a sense, members of an organization places all their anxieties at the feet of the leader, in the hope that this will solve their problems. By doing so, members of an organization remove themselves from the realities of the world, and in a sense, they flee reality. However, idolizing does not only pertain to individuals, ideas too can be idolized. Idolizing ideas is not per se a psychodynamic phenomenon only, it is indeed something that is regularly done at the conscious level. In the case of the US Army, a good example would be the values of the Army: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage.[30] However, idolizing as a psychodynamic phenomenon is when ideas are being idolized as a sub-conscious act, in other words individuals or organizations might not even be aware that they have put all their hopes in one idea, that will guarantee them success. In both cases, there is a potential for conflict

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[29] Ibid., 168.

[30] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, Army Leadership,* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, May 2012), 3-4.

when an external input bursts the bubble of idolizing, by presenting undeniable evidence that either the person or idea being idolized, is not in fact bringing the organization any closer to succeeding in their main task, this can result in the opposite effect devaluation.[31] Devaluation is the exact opposite process of idolizing, were everything that goes wrong is blamed on a person or an idea, the term scapegoat is widely used to cover this process.

<u>Wilfred Bion</u>

Having covered how Bent Jørgensen defined the leader's role at the subconscious level and how defensive mechanisms can be at play in an organization according to Annemette Hasselager, it is now time to present how one the founding fathers of psychodynamic system theory, Wilfred Bion, used the works of renowned psychologist Dr. Sigmund Freud on the psyche of the individual to develop a model for group psychology.

Wilfred Bion started his working life as an officer in the British army, were he fought in the First World War. Subsequently, he trained as a psychologist specializing in psychoanalysis. During the interwar period, he started working at the Tavistock Mental Health Clinic in London, a non-profit organization specializing in consultation. However, it was not until after the Second World War, that Bion started working with group psychology, were he took part in the upstart of a breakaway institute, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, and later became leader of the clinic, that Bion started formulating his theories on group behavior. Bion contributes to our understanding of

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[31] Hasselager, *Lederskab og gruppens psykologi, i Lederskabelse – det personlige lederskab,* 168.

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group behavior be uniquely linking social psychology and individual psychology together, as stated in his 1961 publication Experiences in Groups:

> Psychology and psychopathology have focused attention on the individual often to the exclusion of the social field of which he is a part. There is a useful future in the study of the interplay of individual and social psychology, viewed as equally important interacting elements.[32]

Bion focused on group processes, and the relationship between the individual and the group, where he transferred Sigmund Freud´s ideas of the Ego and the Id to include group behavior, in a sense, creating the ego group and the id group, which Bion refers to as working groups and basic assumptions groups.

Through his research, Wilfred Bion identified three mechanisms or assumptions in group behavior that he finds vital to explain inter group dynamics; fight or flight, dependency and pairing. According to Bion basic assumption groups, or groups working at the psychodynamic level, influenced by either of three mechanisms, are subconsciously being guided by those assumptions in their behavior.[33] Because these processes take place at the subconscious level, these basic assumptions are also identified as regressive defensive mechanisms, that groups are utilizing as a defense against anxiety and to satisfy both the group and the individual needs.

In the following the three sections, the basic assumptions that Bion worked with are explained in greater detail.

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[32] Wilfred Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961), 61.

[33] Ibid., 60.

Dependency

For a group degraded to working at the psychodynamic level, dependency is the process of group members becoming totally dependent on the leaders actions, and complacent in all own actions, in a sense the leader is bestowed god like properties.[34] The leader becomes the entity that, enforce by both positional and personal power, ensures successful problem solving for the entire group. However, bestowing godlike properties on the leader does not necessarily have to present a significant problem for the group's ability to solve a task, as long as the leader is very capable or the tasks are limited in scope and complexity. Should this not be the case, with tasking requiring all individuals of the group to contribute to the best of their abilities, or if the leader is subpar, then there is a high risk of conflict with the higher headquarters providing the tasking. However, it might not necessarily lead to conflicts within the group as the dependency on the leader and the complacency of the group members, can be too strong to initiate the process that Annemette Hasselager defines as devaluation. Bion's process of dependency differs from Hasselager's idolizing, whereas in dependency group members become complacent and reliant on the leader, idolizing merely means that group members rely on the leader or an idea to simplify their world view and deal with organizational anxieties. Thus, group members does not necessarily become complacent, as the process of idolizing helps them deal with stress and anxieties.

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[34] Ibid., 61.

Fight or Flight

The second mechanism or assumption that Wilfred Bion worked with is that of fight or flight processes. A group that operates under the assumption, that they have come together to fight against an external threat or to flee from it, is by per the definition of Wilfred Bion, operating at the psychodynamic level under the influence of flight or fight processes.[35] During this process, individuals within the group form a particular strong union in their attempt to unite against a perceived external treat. It also noteworthy that the treat the group perceives and is collaborating to either defeat or flee from, is defined by themselves from the perception of the group. Thus, from an external perspective, the perceived threat that creates anxiety within the group, may not necessarily be the most dangerous threat to the group from a subjective perspective. The subjective perspective becomes an important fact when observing groups, as the threat that they perceived to be the most imminent and life threatening, might not appear so from outside the group, this does however not make it less real for individuals within the group itself.

Paring

The last mechanism that Wilfred Bion works with is that of pairing. According to Wilfred Bion, groups acting at the psychodynamic level can revert to the mechanism of paring, were two or more individuals within the group form up to provide the group with leadership and direction.[36] This normally happens when new individuals are introduced

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[35] Benedicte Madsen, *Wilfred Bion gruppedynamik* (Psykologisk Institut, Aarhus Universitet 2005), 4,

[36] Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers*, 65.

to the group, and a long-term member of the group performs a pairing with a new member. Is this however not done to welcome a new group member, it is done in the hope that the new individual will bring something to the group, that will bring it forward or break the stalemate. For the rest of the group, the pairing between the old and the new becomes the hope for the future, all hopes and faith is placed on the par of people to solve the problem for the group. This process is not to different from idolizing as described by Annemette Hasselager. However, this process is more tied to a pairing of individuals and the introduction of something new to bring hope to the group, in some aspects it is not to different from a set of parents expecting a child, hoping it will solve their marriage problems.

Summary

The objective of this chapter was to introduce the theoretical foundation utilized to provide new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of command relationship between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile environments. As it is the objective of this study is to provide a new insight, a preliminary study of pervious work conducted to answer the warfighting challenge was conducted. This study showed previous research had been conducted based on the principles of mission command[37] and the theories of Dr. Edgar Schein pertaining to culture and climate of organizations.[38]

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[37] Danish Defense Academy, "Research database," accessed November 9, 2016, http://pure.fak.dk/portal/da/.

[38] Ibid.

Therefore, this thesis will provide new insight by focusing on how subconscious processes influence the command relationship, and ultimately how those processes contribute to the spectra of conflicts between the company and battlegroup level, and thus the breakdown of the command relationship. To that end, the base theory utilized for this research thesis is that of psychodynamic system theory, focusing on three renowned psychologists, working with three different perspectives of psychodynamic system theory. Bent Jørgensen´s leadership functions of; boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological processes. Annemette Hasselager´s defensive mechanisms; projection, splitting, idolizing and devaluation influences, and Wilfred Bio´s basic assumption group mechanisms of; paring, fight or flight and dependencies. The following chapter describes how the thesis research methodology for the conduct of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Having deployed Army units in several different theaters of war over the last two decades, the Danish Army has had to continuously adjust and develop its units to an ever-changing operational environment. To help focus the learning and developing process, the Danish Army set up a lessons learned and lessons identified office, which would methodically collect knowledge from units deployed. The result of their efforts can be seen in many products, however one of the more significant is a list of issues and subject that need new input and ideas for development to happen. Lacking a term for these issues this research thesis has borrowed a term for the U.S. Army *Warfighting Challenges*. The U.S. Army definition of a warfighting challenge is: "Army Warfighting Challenges (AWFCs) are enduring first order problems, the solutions to which will improve current and future force combat effectiveness."[39]

This definition comes very close to a loose definition used by The Danish Army to describe the list. The purpose of this research thesis is to answer one of the lessons identified pertaining to the breakdown of command relationship during combat operations. Thus, the primary research question that this thesis will answer is: How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and

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[39] Army Capabilities Integration Center, "Army Warfighting Challenges," accessed 19 January 2017, http://www.arcic.army.mil/Initiatives/ArmyWarfighting Challenges.

battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat operations?

The base research methodology of this thesis is that of social constructivism, were meaning and understanding of a research problem is reached in cooperation between sources and researcher. However, the introduction of a secondary research methodology for describing the empirical data collection for the research was necessary, as social constructivism does not per say describe whether a qualitative or quantitative empirical collection is preferable. The following sections covers how social constructivism and qualitative research methodology is utilized as a foundation for this research thesis and how the analysis presented in chapter four will operationalized based on the theoretical field.

Social Constructivist Approach

To comprehensively answer the primary and secondary research questions for this thesis, the research methodology for this thesis has to allow for a deep level of understanding of the finer nuances of processes taking place at the subconscious level. By observing conflicts and their effects on command relationship between senior leadership at battlegroup level and leaders at the company level, it is the objective of this thesis to provide an empirically based analysis.

For this purpose, a social constructivist approach would be appropriate, as the founding principle of social constructivism is to create meaning and understanding of a problem through social interaction.[40]

From the perspective of the scientific tradition of social constructivism, knowledge and understanding is obtained through a specific cultural context, and based on values and norms within this culture.[41] The cultural context is depended on the study, and can be either the culture of a specific organization or the cultural background nationality, in this case the culture of the Danish Army.

The underlying principle is that knowledge and understanding is not predetermined, it is generated through social interactions between researcher and research object. Thus utilizing social constructivism implies focusing on the interaction between reality and discourse when analyzing a phenomenon. This is founded on the general idea, that we are all part of an overarching cultural discourse based on time we live in, with the specific values and norms associated with it.[42] At the same time, the individual's subjective view on reality and how this influences perception and understanding of a given situation is also paramount. Because this thesis focuses on the degradation of the command relationship between two levels of an organization from a psychodynamic perspective, the social constructivist frame of thought will help to create understanding of

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[40] Troles Burchall Henningsen, *"Metodelaerer"* (Copenhagen: Danish Defense Publications, 2009), 107-109.

[41] John W Creswell, *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Saga, 2014), 8.

[42] Ibid., 8-9.

how the same situation can be perceived differently from different levels of command. Thus, rather than being an instrument for analysis, the social constructivist paradigm rather becomes a mental guideline for conducting the research. Taking a step back and observing the field of problem between two levels of command by utilizing interviews, each level of command´s unique perspective is revealed, during the interaction between the source and the researcher, creating understanding of a specific point of view on problems pertaining to command relationship. Coupling perspectives from several sources and levels of command through analysis, it is the hope of this researcher to reach a synthesis of understanding pertaining to the main research problem. The next section covers qualitative research methodology is applied to empirical data collection.

<u>Qualitative Approach</u>

Having established how the constructivist approach is used as a mental baseline for this research thesis, this section discusses how the qualitative approach is utilized for empirical data collection.

Concerning qualitative research methodology John W. Creswell wrote in his book *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*: "First select a qualitative study because of the nature of the research question . . . the research question often starts with a how or a what, so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on."[43] Qualitative research can be described as a comprehensive approach to studying social phenomenon within various genres and to interpret results drawing on

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[43] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998), 17.

multiple methods of inquiry.[44] Thus qualitative research can be seen as an umbrella covering a multitude of inquiry forms that help to create understanding and meaning of social phenomena.

Going back to the primary research question "How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat operations?" Consequently, it is the belief of this researcher that the qualitative approach by this definition would be the most viable method to answer the research question, and help contribute with new insight on the research problem.

To achieve the desired level of fidelity in the research data, the chosen from of inquiry is the explorative semi-constructed interview´s based on questions pertaining to the indicators of the theoretical field covered in this chapter. In this process, it is of paramount importance that the sources are being interviewed in a nonrestrictive way, allowing the source to choose on their own what might have been significant for them and why, without leading the source with suggestive questions. In this way, greater validity of the research data is secured and sources unique subjective perspective can be collected for further analysis.

<div align="center">Sources and Empirical Data</div>

This section addresses some of the main thoughts and reasoning behind the choice of sources and how they are implemented.

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[44] Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1999), 2.

For the purpose of this research thesis, only primary sources will be used. This decision is closely linked to the social constructivist idea that understanding and knowledge is created through interaction between the researcher and the sources or objectives being researched. In addition the requirements for empirical data needed to answer the primary research question, would also dictate a need to choose leaders with relevant, concreate and specific experiences with field of the problem, as it pertains to the command relationship between company and battlegroup level organization deployed in combat operations. Therefore all sources are Army Officers, who have been deployed to combat operations and have held central leadership positions within each deployment team.

No considerations have been given to weather the specific sources have been part of a known conflict or not, as this would go against the purpose of this research thesis to qualify the extent to which subconscious processes influences the deterioration of the command relationship. Although sources have in general been chosen from deployment teams were the end of tour reports have indicated deterioration of the command climate in general for the specific team.

Likewise, no considerations have been given to whether or not sources have any background relating to organizational psychology, that would enable them to have a better grasp of the theoretical field for this thesis. Sources are purely chosen for their position as either commander of a company or commander of the battlegroup or leading staff members in the battlegroup.

Sources are divided in to two groups, in accordance with the primary research questions focus on the field of problems originating between company level

organizations and battlegroup level organization. Interviews with sources from the battlegroup level will be named Leader A, B, C . . . whereas leader from the company level will be named Leader 1, 2, 3 . . . In an effort to protect the sources no further references toward the origin of the sources will be utilized for this thesis. Likewise, there will be made no reference to which deployment team the leaders are part of or which deployment in terms of geography. However, since the focus is on units deployed to combat operations, all interviews are conducted with leaders who have been deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan, as those are the only combat deployment currently active. All references to gender of the sources is likewise protected simply by using masculinum throughout the thesis, even though some sources could be female. Using masculinum even for female sources is done to protect the relative small field of female officers who fit the requirements for the sources.

<u>Validity</u>

An inherent weakness of the qualitative approach, which is often mentioned by critics of the method, is the relative modest number of sources used as empirical foundation for the research when compared to the quantitative approach. Critics would argue that a small number of primary source´s specific and unique experiences and the analysis hereof, would only to a small degree be useable to validate a general tendency or problem area for a research thesis. To mitigate this critique and uphold the validity of qualitative approach to answer the primary research question and validate how subconscious processes in general influences the command climate, it is of paramount importance to establish a strong connection between the theoretical foundation and empirical data collected. This connection is important as the three main theorists

presented in chapter 2 all have conducted extensive and comprehensive research in each of their theoretical fields to validate their theories in a general and broad sense. By creating a strong coupling between the theories of human behaviorism and the empirical data, validity for the findings during the analysis conducted in this thesis utilizing relative few sources, will be secured whilst at the same time validating the general conclusions in this thesis for a broader range of situations then the specific research area of the Danish army.

Regarding sources and their statements for the empirical data, their validity is being ensured by only choosing leaders how have recently been deployed themselves in relevant functions within the company or battlegroup level, recently here mining within the last four years. This measure is seen as a prudent step in ensuring validity for the amount of details that each source is able to credibly convey for the research in this thesis, seeing that the focus of this thesis is subconscious processes detailed descriptions becomes paramount. Another aspect of validity regarding sources is that of after rationalization; sources beginning to interpret own and others efforts during their deployment. As demonstrated by this quote: "Immediately after returning from deployment, my worst experience was seeing one of my soldiers being badly wounded . . . however in retrospect it was more the confrontations we had with the staff."[45]

To mitigate after rationalization, sources will be directed to describe situations as they experienced them, rather than giving explanations to situations they experienced.

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[45] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

Furthermore, sources will not be told in advance what the specific research focus to avoid confirmation bias.

<center>Operationalizing</center>

The challenges of any cobbling between a theoretical foundation and collected empirical data, is that abstract concepts of theory and causality very rarely can be observed directly when dealing with human subjects, this is especially true when trying to observe subconscious processes. An example of this would be trying to observe if a member of an organization is acting in accordance with the cultural norms and values of the organization. Even if you have very well defined values, like the U.S. Army values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity and Personnel Courage.[46] It might still prove very difficult to directly observe if an individual adheres to those values. Instead, what is needed is a set of tangible indicators that corresponds with the specific theory and if identified would strongly suggest causality between the observed behavior and the theoretical foundation. Going back to the example, a researcher looking at whether or not a soldier acts in accordance with the Army value of Duty, would need to start by defining what constitutes good conduct of duty, and what are the tangible indicators. In this case, a simple indicator would be if the soldier keeps his weapon well maintained at all times, a positive observation of this indicator would thus give the researcher a reasonable foundation to conclude that the soldier in this case lives up to the organizational value of Duty.

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[46] Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, May 2012), 3-6.

The research presented in this thesis pertains to human subjects, and tries to give explanations to the observed empirical data through analysis and use of the theoretical foundations presented in chapter 2. In an effort to operationalize the methodology of this thesis, it becomes paramount to identify indicators pertaining to the theoretical foundation that enables the researcher to establish causality between the observed empirical data and the theory in an effort to understand and give explanations to the research questions.

Indicators

The following is the author´s own interpretation of the three main theoretical foundations based on the authors understanding of their main publications; Bent Jørgensen *Psychodynamic Perspectives on Leadership*, Annemette Hasselager *Leadership and Group Psychology* and Wilfred Bion *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers*. The objective of this paragraph is to introduce the reader to tangible indicators used by the author to establish causality between the observed empirical data and the theories.

Indicators for Bent Jørgensen

Characteristics for indicators of boundary regulations: The leader of a group performs as a filter for the flow of information in and out of the group. The leader receives extremal information and process it in to manageable sub tasks for subordinates. The leader collects information from subordinates, analysis and processes it into coherent information presentable to superiors or external use.

Characteristics for indicators of problem solving: The primary indicator for a leader demonstrating a comprehensive problem solving ability, from a psychodynamic perspective, is a continuing focus on the main task, directing and guiding subordinates efforts continuously towards aching the main task. The leader must deduce own tasks based on directives and orders, both specified and implied, from superiors and delegate sub tasks in a comprehensive manner, all the time making sure that the necessary guidance and information is given.

Characteristics for indicators of pathological processes: Leaders take care to create clear and comprehensive hierarchy and structures where there are clear links between responsibilities and authority, likewise tasks are allocated with the necessary resources and requirements. All characteristics of the "good enough" organization or an organization in balance. Indicators that an organization is not in balance and pathological process are not clear would be; distrust, hostility and lack of cohesion all symptoms of the paranoid generating organization.

Indicators for Annemette Hasselager

Characteristics for indicators of projection: The leader absorbs subordinates negative perceptions of either external pressure from environmental factors, other organizations problem solving abilities or just general misperceptions build on organizational anxiety. The leader then processes and transforms these perceptions and emotions to something constructive in order to generate a sense of security and confidence in the main task for the organization.

Characteristics for indicators of splitting: Members or leaders of an organization try to simplify their subjective reality by adopting a pure black and white perception. The

group generates a sharply divided boundary around the group itself, were members of the group are representatives of everything good, and everyone else are the cause of everything bad.

Characteristics for indicators of idolizing and devaluation: Members of a group idolize the leader, being it the formal or informal leader, in an effort to move focus for the harshness of realities. The leader becomes the symbol of hope for the group to which all hope of success is contributed. When expectations are not meet, or the leader fails to dampen anxiety, the opposite behavior occurs were the leader is devaluated and blamed for every failure within the group.

Indicators for Wilfred Bion

Characteristics for indicators of dependencies: Members of a group or leaders of groups become totally depended on their superior's ability to make decisions for them, relying on them to make the right decisions to minimize own anxiety. The responsibility for problem solving rest solely on the leadership, with high levels of complacency from group members or subordinate leaders.

Characteristics for indicators of fight or flight: Faced with a perceived strong external threat, like the existential threat of combat, members of a group create strong internal bindings to address anxiety. The group as a whole will choose to either use the bindings to collectively fight the threat or flee from the threat.

Characteristics for indicators of pairing: Members of a group create a pair either with a new member entering the team, or with existing members in the hope that this new par within the group can break the stalemate and bring new energy to the group. The

identification of pairing either inside the group or with a new member becomes paramount for this indicator.

Operational Structure of the Analysis

Figure 2 is a visual representation of the design for the operationalization of the research presented in this thesis. The collection of empirical data and the analysis will be conducted in accordance with the methodology of social constructivist and qualitative approach, seeking to understand and create meaning through social interaction with sources. For the analysis, all the empirical data will be reviewed for indicators of psychodynamic processes influencing the command relationship. In an effort to bring structure to the presentation of the analysis and its findings, each theoretical perspective is presented separately with their three individual main focus areas being covered as shown in figure 2. Thus, all empirical data will be reviewed individually for each of the nine focus areas and their respective indicators. Each theoretical perspective will be followed by a short conclusion that will feed into the final conclusion and recommendation, in effort to answer the research questions.
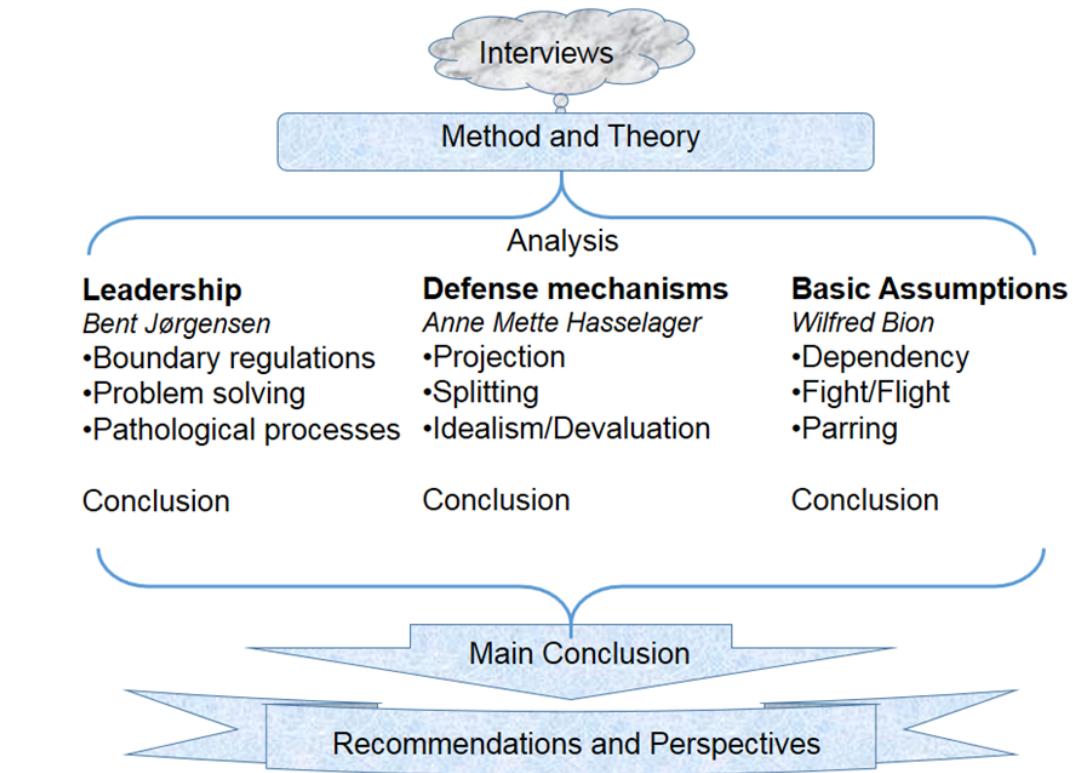
Figure 2.   Operational Diagram

Source: Created by author.

Summary

The objective of this thesis is to provide new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of command relationship. The thesis does so utilizing the three different theories within psychodynamic system theory presented in chapter 2 to analyzing interviews and questionnaires to identify perceived problem areas within the subconscious domain and their effects on the command relationship. The base research methodology for that analysis, which will be presented in chapter 4, is that of social constructivism, characterized by the concept of generating

meaning and understanding of the research problem in corporation between sources and

researcher. With regards to empirical data, a secondary research methodology was

introduced, as social constructivism does not per say describe whether a qualitative or

quantitative empirical collection is preferable. The qualitative research methodology is

utilized as a foundation for how empirical data was collected for this research thesis.

Finally, validity of the findings of analysis is ensured by establishing a strong connection

between the theoretical foundation and empirical data collected. The next chapter will

present the analysis of the empirical data in accordance with the methodology presented

in this chapter, and hold it up against the three theoretical perspective presented in

chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

       This chapter conducts an analysis of the collected empirical data in accordance with the methodology described in chapter 3 utilizing the theoretical foundation described in chapter 2, in an effort to answer the primary research question: How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat operations?

       It does so by analyzing the empirical data set against each of the three theoretical branches one at a time, with a short summary that answers the secondary research questions, contributing to answering the primary research question in chapter 5. Looking broadly at the collected empirical data it becomes clear that there is a general tendency evident throughout all the interviews and questionnaires conducted. In general, there seems to be divergent ideas of what exactly is the main task, in some cases sources do not even thing there ever was one. Lack of a clear main task seems to be further aggravated by the considerable external pressure leaders face during deployments. Thus, even before starting to utilize the theoretical foundation to analyze to which extent psychodynamic processes influence the command relationship, there are some clear tendencies that suggest that the sources for the interviews are operating at the psychodynamic level rather than at the goal oriented level.

The following quote from the company level clearly highlights this proposition: "I don´t recall that there was a clear objective for the battlegroup stating the end state for the deployment . . . In any case, we did not agree on the objective."[47]

Clearly from the perspective of this company level source the main task was not well defined, which is a foundation for operating in the goal rational field. This point is further supported by a source from the battlegroup level: "Each deployment team did their own thing within their left and right boundaries without contemplating what previous teams had done. I don´t think the common soldier thinks that much about it."[48]

Here implied, they do not need to know. These two quotations are generally representative for most of the interviews conducted, when sources have been asked directly what they saw as the main task for the deployment. They show that the company level, which in many cases is the executing level, does not recall a main task ever been given or did not agree with it, while at the same time the battlegroup level does not necessarily recognize the need to visualize and explain the main task to the lower level, as it is not believed to add value. As per the theory presented in Chapter 2 and represented by figure 1, an organization not knowing or clearly understanding the main task, would almost certainly make that organization regress to working predominantly at psychodynamic level. For the relationship between the two levels of command, this constitutes a significant problem, since the company level often is the level that directly solves the main task for the battlegroup, one part of the organization might expect one

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[47] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen, 2016.

[48] Interview with Leader B, Copenhagen, 2016.

type or solution, whereas the executing part acts in accordance with their own perception of the main task. Thus, making it very hard for commanders to act in accordance with the intent of their higher formation, and therefore this proposition also relates to mission command no being effectively utilized.

The following sections provide the main analysis of this research thesis going in-depth with the empirical data and analyzing them in accordance with the theoretical perspectives provided by the three main theorists presented in chapter 2.

<u>Analysis of Bent Jørgensen</u>

When framed by the theories of Bent Jørgensen, it becomes apparent that the conditions under which operations are being carried out in Afghanistan and Iraq, present a series of unique leadership challenges pertaining to the subconscious domain.

The Danish Army as an organization is centered on a strong hierarchy, were higher formations give orders to subordinate formations utilizing task and purpose framed by mission command, in the context of thesis the two levels are battlegroup and company level formations. Subordinate units then process and refine the orders through a nation specific decisions making process in order to disseminate orders to their subunits, again using mission command as a construct. Thus, in theory, the responsibility for communicating the main task and conducting boundary regulation functions; regulating the flow of information between battlegroup, company and platoons, is clearly defined, this process is also known as the chain of command.

However, during counter insurgency type operations, the type of operations conducted by the Danish Army in Afghanistan and Iraq, the chain of command becomes more unclear. Unlike major combat operations, most tasks are carried out at the platoon

level, in praxis a list of orders and tasks known as a weekly operations order is produced every week by the battlegroup, then disseminated through the company level to the platoon level. Next, the platoon commander contacts the part of the battlegroup staff, which is directly responsible for the specific task and conducts direct coordination.[49] Although this procedure seems reasonable and comprehensive, there is a latent problem lurking. Who takes over the responsibility of visualizing and relating the task to the main task for battlegroup? Is it still the company commander or is it the individual staff officer from the battlegroup? Or is it up to the platoon commander to figure out how a task nests with the main task for the battlegroup? According to Bent Jørgensen's theories, this approach could lead to problematic pathological processes with lost focus on the main task, and a consequent degeneration from the goal orientated field to the psychodynamic field. Bearing this in mind, it would be expected to see examples of organizations; companies or platoons exhibiting behavior indicating that they are operating in the psychodynamic field, like altering given tasks or producing new tasks that serve other purposes, and doesn't nest with or support the main task of the battlegroup as a whole. Likewise, it is expected that factors like; clarity of the main task, the leader's abilities to conduct boundary regulations and perceived comprehensiveness of the organization, will influence the organizations position as either predominately working in the problem solving or psychodynamic field.

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[49] This standard operating pattern is mentioned in several interviews, and corresponds with the authors own experience from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The following three sections discusses how the three main leadership functions of boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological processes have influenced the command relationship at the subconscious level.

Boundary Regulation

Throughout the empirical data collected there is a notable number of cases were leaders mention some of the indicators pertaining to the leader's function as boundary regulator, and the importance of the function. In relation to a rather serious conflict between the battlegroup and one of the companies[50], Leader B described how he did not think the company commander was being an effective leader. Leader B focused on how the company commander, in his view, was delivering unfiltered information directly from the soldiers to the battlegroup, and didn´t sufficiently sort and process complaints by the soldiers in his words, "He listened to them, instead of saying: shut up and get the job done."[51]

Pertaining to the same conflict, Leader B expressed how he thinks the company commander should have come to the battlegroup leadership earlier, instead of letting emotions run high. From Leader B´s perspective it is equally reprehensible, that the company commander did not contain his soldier´s discontent and that he did not manage

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[50] The conflict is described in an end of tour rapport, and leader B has provided this researcher with the original mail correspondence between Leader B and the company commander, as well as the mail correspondence sent back to Army Staff. The root of the conflict was a meeting conducted between the battlegroup and a company, were the platoon commanders openly declared a complete lack of trust in the battlegroup leadership, followed by a mail sent back to Army Staff, bypassing the Chain of Command.

[51] Interview with Leader B, Copenhagen 2016.

to convey the problems in a comprehensive and constructive way to the battlegroup leadership. From this description, it becomes evident from the indicators present that, in Leader B´s perspective, the company commander failed at what Bent Jørgensen would refer to as boundary regulation. The outcome in this case, having reviewed the 40 pages of email correspondence and interviewed both parts, was an unnecessary escalation of the conflict leading to a dramatic end were a statement of distrust was set from members of the company to Army Staff.

In another interesting example, Leader 4 talks about his loyalties and where they lie. "My loyalty was primarily directed downwards, in a relation close to 80-20, which meant, that during my deployment I was well suited to deal with internal conflicts and hardship, but in retrospect not so well suited to deal with external conflicts with the battlegroup."[52]

In this case, although Leader 4 does not use the terminology of Bent Jørgensen referring to boundary regulation, it is clear that this indeed the topic of this quote. Referring to Bent Jørgensen´s theories on boundary regulations,[53] Leader 4 here clearly demonstrated that he has been dragged inwards towards the center of the organization he represents. In this case the company level, thereby degrading his external role as a leader, jeopardizing the command relationship to the battlegroup, as was the case with Leader B observations, although the two cases are not related.

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[52] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 12.

[53] Jørgensen, *Psykodynamiske perspektiver på ledelse, i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi – på arbejde under overfladen*, 164.

There are also examples of leaders being aware of and having focus on boundary regulations, but still not striking the right balance, in the words of Leader 3: "I made it a virtue to assign tasks from the battlegroup in a way that was tailored to each of my three very different platoon commanders. In doing so I was trying to mitigate unnecessary conflicts, where platoon commanders would disagree with tasks."[54]

Whether or not conflicts were successfully mitigated in this manner remains unclear, however Leader 3 goes on to mention that he prided himself on solving all assigned task without questions. In this case, it would seem that Leader 3 neglected another important function of boundary regulation, communicating the battlegroup main task and regulating external pressure. In retrospect, Leader 3 acknowledged that his ability to regulate the external border towards the battlegroup was questioned by his subordinates. He described how, during one significant situation where the main task for the company was changed by the battlegroup, with consequent large changes to platoon tasks, lead to a confrontation in the company; "One platoon commander was being disobedient, while squad leaders were gathering in an attempt to get a commander´s gathering[55] to clarify how many soldiers I was willing to sacrifice to promote my own career."[56]

This case clearly demonstrates how extreme external pressure in from of physical danger, combined with a poor understanding of the main task, leads to subordinates

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[54] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 8.

[55] Commanders gathering, is a meeting conducted by the commander, were pressing topics can be discussed freely.

[56] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

questioning the leader's ability to weigh the safety of his men against fulfilling the main task. This event demonstrated how unsatisfactory boundary regulation leads to a perception of the leader taking sides with an external organization; the battlegroup, which in turn leads to a projection of anxiety by the soldiers. This process is included in the section with Annemette Hasselager and projective defense mechanisms. With regards to the deviation from the normal chain of command, as described in the intro section for Bent Jørgensen, it is expected that this operating procedure, however comprehensive it might be, has the potential to generate problems with boundary regulations.

As expected, several sources reference this deviation from the chain of command, referring to how staff members at the battlegroup level take over some of the boundary regulation functions from the company commander. However, throughout the empirical data there is no mentioning of this having any adverse effects, it seems to be a case of win-win for the company having staff members also taking responsibility for boundary regulating functions. Likewise, no indications have been found on staff members overstepping their boundaries and tasking platoon commanders directly, bypassing the company commander, illustrated by two examples from Leader 3 and 4. When asked if tasks were directly given from staff members to platoon commanders, Leader 4 answered: "I really think, that we succeeded in containing this, which in large part was due to the chief of staff. He spent a lot of energy reminding his staff that tasks go through the company commander."[57]

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[57] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 10.

This response corresponds with several others. Leader 3 expanded on this adding: "In battlegroup staff two branches stood out from the rest, having taking the interests of the company to heart; S1 and S4 really had our backs."[58]

Again, this quote is representative of several other sources mentioning similar situations. In all examples staff members seem to act purely out of good intentions and with the best interest of subordinate units in mind.

In conclusion, the empirical data and the cases mentioned during this section, would suggest that boundary regulations issues are present during deployments, and that theirs is a high likelihood of conflicts when leaders fail to act as a boundary regulator. Failing to act as a boundary regulator, affects the command relationship both between battlegroup and company as well as within the company itself. However, boundary regulations issues pertaining to the chain of command being different was not supported by the empirical data, to the contrary there seems to be evidence to support that a more direct evolvement by the battleground staff in the company seems to be beneficial to boundary regulations at large.

Problem Solving

A common pattern for counterinsurgency type operations, the most typical deployment type of operations currently, is that units are often more dispersed and work in smaller continents, when compared to major combat type operations, which present a challenge when trying to utilize mission command and relating a subunits tasks to the main task. The main task for a deployment is rarely solved by a single team, rather the

[58] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

pattern from the latest wars in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Cyprus and

Sudan would suggest that the main task is solved over a period of 10 to 20 years.

According to Bent Jørgensen, in order to have successful problem solving, it is

paramount that the main task is clear and concise. "Without a higher purpose and without

a clear vision of the main task for an organization, there can be no guidance, no direction

and no help to comprehensively allocate resources."[59]

The real challenge here becomes how to formulate and maintain a clear main task

over several teams, a responsibility that ultimately belongs to the policy makers in

government, and for the battlegroup, to visualize and formulate their version to the

soldiers. If there was indeed a focus on visualizing a main task and proliferating it, it

would be expected that most of the staff in the battlegroup would be able to verbally

formulate what the precise main task for their team was. However, there is no evidence in

the empirical data to support that the battlegroup was given a main task, illustrating this

both Leader A and D explains how they never received any main task, and that they

believe each team would have to analyze the environment, and ultimately coming up with

their own main task for each team, culminating in a base line operations order covering a

6-month period.[60] Leader B expressed it in these words: "Each team kind of did their own

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[59] Jørgensen, *Psykodynamiske perspektiver på ledelse, i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi – på arbejde under overfladen*, 166.

[60] Questionnaire from Leader D paragraph 1, Interview with Leader A, Copenhagen 2016.

thing within their own left/right arc of fire, without looking to much at what previous teams had done."[61]

Each team coming up with their own main task, might not necessarily present a problem for the battlegroup itself, as long as the vision of a main task is indeed generated and proliferated to subordinates. Nevertheless, there is no empirical evidence to support that there was ever proliferated a clear and concise main task, Leader B even expressed his doubts to weather it holds any value saying: "I don´t think the soldiers think that far."[62]

He went on to express, that in his view, there is no need to formulate a clear main task covering a six-month deployment and that: "Units should be able to read between the lines."[63]

All though in the end he acknowledged, that during a significant conflict with subordinate units, participating in a large-scale brigade operation with a clear purpose, did give the soldiers something to focus one and as a consequence conflicts ceased for the duration of the operation.[64]

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[61] Interview with Leader B, Copenhagen 2016.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

Another Leader from the same team, Leader 1, also described his views on the main task: "I don´t recall, that there was a clear purpose from the battlegroup, that we could put up and say; this is what we are here for."[65]

Leader 1 described how he experienced that he had to define his own main task from the start, to include training back in Denmark, where he had to rely mostly on himself, with the battlegroup being too busy with external activities, to take note of the company. Another interesting aspect is that Leader 1 noticed that his soldiers were far more likely to accept tasks that reminded them of training back in Denmark, meaning primarily combat operations with clearly defined purposes linked to a main task.[66] "The more green,[67] the more war like, the better it would be."[68]

The above quote is a clear representation of what Leader 1 defined as the outcome of not having a clearly defined main task; with soldiers reverting to what they know and what they trained for, it becomes a task in itself to fight in a certain way. This case is a very clear example of an organization degrading to work predominantly in the psychodynamic field, defining their own main task, in this case combat operations, which may or may not nest with the main task of the battlegroup as a whole. Leader 1 made a further comment on the subject of being in combat: "This is what we came here

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[65] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

[66] A standard training period for a company in the Danish Army is 2 years, primarily focused on major combat operations, with only 3-6 month devoted to counter insurgency operations.

[67] Expression covering combat operations.

[68] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

(Afghanistan. red) for in the first place."[69] This perception of combat being a main task in itself is not limited to enlisted only, Leader 4 emphasized it this way: "From time to time I would also myself get caught up by the urge to kill the enemy."[70]

On another account, Leader 1 described how he perceived the main task as being debatable and up to his better judgment in absence of clear guidance from his superiors. Solving tasks on his own from a small patrol base, he described how he had to weigh the requests of the Civilian Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Officer and activities by other patrol bases against his own objectives and the safety of his men to resolve the main task for his unit.[71] "One thing is that the task may be unclear to me, but it must not be unclear for my soldiers. If it is, I will not be able to motivate them to walk out of the gate and risk their lives."[72]

A clear example of how an unclear or missing main task leads to leaders taking matters into own hands and self-define what they perceive to be the main task, which could potentially lead to conflict between the two organizational levels if the main tasks does not nest.

Leader E expressed another example of an unclear definition of the main task, which leads to inappropriate problem solving. He described how a task received from Task Force Helmand, were the battlegroup staff finds it difficult to take ownership of,

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 9.

[71] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

[72] Ibid.

leads to a lack of ownership from the subunits as well, which again leads to the subunits looking after their own needs and interests: "I feel that the lack of ownership contaminated the subunits . . . tasks were solved in very unimaginative and unengaged ways."[73]

While solving the task, he mentioned how one company chooses to set up a forward operating base, during a situation where the battlegroup was specifically trying to avoid becoming tied down to fixed installations, in order to maintain freedom om movement. In leader E´s perspective, setting up a forward operating base was done purely out of self-interests by the company, without taking the objectives of the battlegroup as whole in to consideration.[74] In this situation, a significant conflict later arose between the company and the battlegroup, with both sides claiming to have the better situational understanding of the operational problem needing solving. This case in general highlights how lack of a clearly defined main task can lead to both unwanted results and conflict.

Summing up the results of analyzing the empirical data pertaining to problem solving, it seems that most leaders in general place great importance in their soldiers knowing that there is a clear purpose with given tasks. However, as illustrated by the above cases, the data also highlights the lack of a clear main task as a potential source of conflict and poor problem solving abilities in general.

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[73] Questionnaire from Leader E, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7a.

[74] Ibid.

Pathological Processes

When a battalion in the Danish Army is assigned to a deployment, it changes its organization to a battlegroup before leaving, and normally the battlegroup commander can expect to have all personnel assigned up to three months before deploying. This change is a function of the way the Danish Army conducts counter insurgency operations, boosting battalions with a host of additional assets like electronic warfare teams, all source intelligence cells and human intelligence cells, to facilitate all these units the staff organization is increased by 55 extra staff members. The normal chain of command, organizational structures and responsibilities are adapted to suit the realities of the situation, which is one the characteristics of healthy organization; tasks and organizations are in balance.[75]

However, since the changes made do not coincide with the organizational structures, individuals and units were accustomed to from training, with reassignment of tasks, responsibilities and competencies, there is a potential for frustration and conflict as some individuals loose positional power or experiences that their authorities are challenged or set a side. This perspective is clearly described by Leader 5:

> I can really understand how some units feel they are being run over during deployment . . . at home, during training you are left to your own devises, having a huge responsibility for both training, economy and equipment . . .during deployment however much of that freedom is taken away from you along with the ability to define your own tasks in time and space.[76]

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[75] Jørgensen, *Psykodynamiske perspektiver på ledelse, i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi – på arbejde under overfladen*, 169.

[76] Questionnaire from Leader 5. Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 11.

One of the changes to the normal chain of command is when platoons are out conducting normal frame work patrols. In this case, they will normally be commanded by the battlegroup, represented by the tactical operations center (TOC) instead of the company commander, which is the normal chain of command. This change from the normal pathological process is a well know source of conflict mentioned in several end of tour reports, and by most of the sources for this thesis. At the root of this is often mentioned a distrust in the formal command authority of the TOC personnel to command actions to be taken by a platoon in the field, as well as a more general distrust in their professional competencies. In one example by Leader 1 were his platoon is operating from a remote forward operating on their own, he is ordered by the TOC to send the majority of his platoon to the main operating base, with a loosely defined task to act as a quick response force. It is the view of the platoon commander that the force left behind in his forward operating base, is insufficient to guard the base from hostile activities. As a consequence, he refused to obey the order, not recognizing the authority of the duty officer he requests a higher-ranking officer come to the TOC. The commanding officer (CO) of the battlegroup then took over and gave the platoon commander a clear task and purpose, with this new information the platoon commander made a new suggestion to the troops to task scheme in order to solve both tasks, which the CO accepted, and the platoon completed both tasks.[77] In relation to pathological processes in an organization, this case shows how an apparent lack of competencies and authority by the duty officer, as well as an unclear purpose with the task, provoked an immediate regression to the

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[77] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

psychodynamic field by the platoon commander. In this context, the lack of competencies and authority as perceived by the platoon might be a product of previous experiences or personal relations. In any case, it is worsened by the duty officer´s apparent lack of understanding for the operational environment and the conditions the platoon is operation under, jeopardizing the security of the platoon. Leader 1 described it this way: "Leaving six men alone to secure a compound in the middle of the green zone[78] for 24 hours is madness."[79]

As a result, the task is completely rejected, and the platoon immediately regresses to the psychodynamic field putting their own main task first, in this case safety. Acceptance of the task is not created, before a more competent leader takes over, or at least a leader with formal authority, utilizing mission command in recognition of the platoon commander´s right to lead his platoon, or boundary regulate, immediately reverting the platoon to the goal rational field.

Other leaders describe the same experience and perceptions of the battlegroup TOC being incompetent. Leader 4´s input to mitigating some of these conflicts is clearly defined by bad experiences stating: "Don't hire completely incompetent people to fill key position within the staff."[80]

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[78] The vegetated zone between the desert and Helmand River is commonly referred to as green zone. This is not to be mistaken for the green zone term used in Baghdad, were green zone means a secure area, indeed most of the fighting in Afghanistan´s Helmand province takes place in the green zone.

[79] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

[80] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 13.

The staff itself also to a certain degree deals with a feeling of its own incompetency. Leader E described how the training back in Denmark in general terms was inadequate for the tasks they faced once deployed, due to the staff spending all their time facilitating the subunits training not leaving time to train internal procedures. Related to the above case, Leader E described how a number of procedures regarding TOC duties, command authorities being amongst them, were not adequately clarified before deployment.[81]

In relation to TOC duties and the subunits perception of competency, it is quite remarkable that both Leader 1 and 2 describe how a visit to the TOC, during a highly stressful situation with multiple units in contact, gave them a better understanding of the duty officers working environment and a new found respect for his competencies: "This was a major learning point later on... it was important that my platoon commanders went to the TOC and witnessed what goes on during troops in contact."[82]

In general, throughout the empirical data, and highlighted by the above cases, there is evidence to support that lack of knowledge, insight and respect for each other working environments and conditions is a significant contributor to conflicts between the two levels of command. From the company perspective, the experience is that the battlegroup staff loses touch with the conditions the companies are working under over time, and from the battlegroup level the perception is that the companies to an increasing

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[81] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 3.

[82] Interview with Leader 2, Copenhagen 2016.

degree start to focus on solving tasks more in line with their own perception of what the

main task is, and so they stray from the main task of the battlegroup as a whole.

An example of how a company loses trust in a battlegroup leader, is during a

situation where the battlegroup commander tries to motivate a platoon by saying that if

they give it everything they have, they can rest afterwards. Leader 1 described the

reaction to the motivation like this:

> My soldiers laughed at the battalion commander. Because every time he came
> down to us, it was because we had to perform something extra . . . give everything
> you have, afterwards there will be a low tide in activities for you to rest but there
> never was, there never was a low tide in activities.[83]

The unit in this example has previously experienced not to have their needs for

restitution and maintenance respected following times of prolonged hardship. From the

perspective of the subunit, the battalion commander in this case exhibits a poor ability to

compromise between task, resources and the need for restitution, which causes a paranoia

regression in form of negative expectations before a task.[84] Again the lack of

understanding, insight and respect for each other working environments and conditions is

a significant contributor to conflicts between the two levels of command.

Summary

In summary, as expected the change in command structure did indeed present a

series of problems relating to how units focus on solving the main task of an

organization. The platoon levels perception of the main task often become a balancing act

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[83] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

[84] Ibid.

between many different needs, and without a clear vision of the main task, there is a risk of subordinate units regressing to the psychodynamic level putting their own needs before solving the main task. However, the expectations that the changes in command structure would blur the company commander's boundary regulations were not justified. Both levels of command focused on retaining the chain of command, and the staff even seemed to support boundary regulations for subordinate units, making it a win-win situation. However, when a leader fails to fulfill his role as a boundary regulator, there is a marked potential for conflict, as was highlighted with the case where the company commander did fail in his role, resulting in a major conflict with platoon commanders declaring their distrust in the battlegroup leadership. In summary, the cases in this section have revealed that the most important boundary regulating function for leaders to fulfill in order to avoid conflicts, is to maintain focus on the main task and relating individual tasks performed by subunits to the main task.

With regards to pathological processes in an organization it is evident that subunits perception of the battlegroup staff ability to understand the conditions they work under, is paramount for their ability to work in the goal oriented field. When the staff exhibits poor understanding of the working conditions for subordinates, the staff is perceived as being incompetent by subordinates, resulting in conflicts and units not working in the goal oriented field. Uncomprehensive organizational structures and unclear command authorities is also a source of conflicts, this was the case with a platoon being given to many tasks by the TOC, with the platoon commander immediately regressing to the psychodynamic field and rejecting the task.

In conclusion the three above sections have shown how the main leader functions of boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological processes have influenced the command relationship at the subconscious level in various ways, and how leaders have either dealt with them and avoided conflict or have chosen not to deal with them which in many cases have lead directly to conflicts.

Analysis of Annemette Hasselager

When objectively observing an organizations behavior, it can be hard to judge exactly what goes one beneath the superficial causality that is directly observable and recognize the reactions spawned by an organization working in the psychodynamic field. For this purpose, the theories of Annemette Hasselager on social defensive mechanisms, provides a tool for identifying whether or not an organization is indeed working predominantly in the psychodynamic field. The following three sections covers how the three main defensive mechanisms of projection, splitting and idealizing/devaluation influenced the command relationship at the subconscious level., utilizing the indicators described during chapter 3 to identify cases for analysis.

Projection

In general, when facing organizations or individuals who have regressed to projection it can be quite hard to identify the defensive mechanism utilized as such. Therefore, as in many other situations, it is important for a leader to have a good command relationship with his subordinates to recognize when it goes on. To successfully do this, would require a great deal of patience, empathy and understanding on behalf of the leader, to be able to detect the often subtle nuances that deviate for the

normal picture. Failing to do so, could lead to conflict with misunderstood messages at the heart of it.

According to Hasselager, projection is more than just a defensive mechanism, it is a basic human reaction, that shows it self when ones believe systems; worldview, self-image or faith is being put under such an extreme pressure, that the individual or organization is no longer able to cope with realities, and therefore creates an alternative version of reality that better harmonizes with their believe system.[85]

An example of a leader that handles this difficult balancing act of emotions well is described by Leader 3: "Squad-leaders were gathering in an attempt to get a commander´s gathering to clarify how many soldiers I was willing to sacrifice to promote my own career."[86]

In this case, a group within an organization faced by the extreme external pressure of prolonged combat, project their fear of losing some of their soldiers on to the leader. When faced with the proposition, according to Annemette Hasselager, the leader now has three options. He can choose to reject their anxiety or self-identify with it, which in both cases will generate even more anxiety, or actively engage in the conversation to process and contain the anxiety of the group, break it down and covert it to a learning experience.[87] Leader 3 does indeed solve the conflict by containment with a positive

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[85] Hasselager, *Lederskab og gruppens psykologi, i Lederskabelse – det personlige lederskab*, 168.

[86] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

[87] Hasselager, *Lederskab og gruppens psykologi, i Lederskabelse – det personlige lederskab,* 171.

outcome and a renewed focus on the main task: "They were allowed to air their frustrations, and afterwards they kicked ass again."[88]

This type of successful conflict management seems to be typical for the company level, and is evident throughout the empirical data with very few cases of conflict is ever mentioned at the company level.

Conversely, there is some empirical data that shows a potential source for conflict when subordinate units from the platoon level project their anxiety directly at the battlegroup. In this instance, the company commander has a particular difficult task to manage, having to both contain and process the projection within his unit, while at the same time in a comprehensive way convey the anxieties and worries he might share on to the battlegroup, while not regressing to projection himself. Similarly, the battlegroup staff and commander has role to play in processing projection when faced with it from subordinate units. As was the case with the company commander, so too does the battlegroup have the basic three options to process projection. The battlegroup can choose to reject any assertions and allegations of anxiety and worries, or the general situation perceived by the unit, by simply stating the situation is not as perceived by the unit, or that the allegations are invalid and is to be regarded as nothing more than general discontent. An example of how a subunits projection is flatly rejected, and how it can lead to conflict between the two level of command can be seen from the following case.[89]

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[88] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

[89] This case is built upon the same mail reference utilized for the boundary regulation section of this thesis. The root of the conflict was a meeting conducted between the battlegroup and a company, were the platoon commanders openly declared a

This situation has been building for some time, with the most noteworthy problems as perceived by the company being lack of maintenance on both vehicles and equipment due to the high operations pace and restitution for the soldiers, coupled with a promise by the battlegroup commander to have a few days of down time, that never came through, sets the stage for the company projecting their anxiety and problems at the battlegroup and specifically the commander. This situation eventually leads to the company commander making a decision to confront he battlegroup commander with the problems at hand, Leader 2 stated it this way:

> So, in some way we managed to solve the day to day tasks, while trying to give hints to commander whenever I could . . . but we were not good enough at kicking in the door, neither myself nor the people I sparred with in S3. In my mind, there was no doubt that the S3 was as much to blame as myself for not kicking in the door in time.[90]

The situation later escalates to a state of conflict between the two leaders, with the mail correspondence from the platoon commanders to Army Staff declaring their distrust in battlegroup leadership being the final outcome of this case. From the quote, it is quite evident that Leader 2 is caught in a tension between the projection he is submitted to from his subordinates and the containment of it, and his role as boundary regulator conveying actually and valid problems and worries to the battlegroup. It is also quite evident that Leader 2 thinks his messages are being rejected or ignored by the battlegroup commander, a problem that potential could lead to a deepening of the conflict, if the company commander as a reaction regresses to projection as well. In the final part of the

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complete lack of trust in the battlegroup leadership, followed by a mail sent back to Army Staff, bypassing the Chain of Command.

[90] Interview with Leader 2, Copenhagen 2016.

quote, there is indeed singes of what could be the beginning of a projection, blaming the S3 for also not being able to kick down the door to the commander. In this situation, according to Hasselager, the comprehensive approach for the battlegroup commander, whether or not he finds the critique valid, would be to try and contain and process the projection, rejecting it would lead to more projection and increase the potential for conflict. Meanwhile, the battlegroup commander's perception in this case, is that the company commander is merely mirroring the discontent of his soldiers[91] and therefore chooses to reject the projection saying: "NCOs, platoon and company commanders have a responsibility to filter what is passed up the chain of command, and sometimes be the asshole saying "quit complaining and get the job done."[92]

This quote, along with rest of mail correspondence, gives the impression that the battlegroup commander does indeed reject the projection, and thereby actually deepens the conflict between the two levels of command. The result of this rejecting, is a continuation of the conflict were the company commander no longer feels that he is able to penetrate with his message, and therefore the conflict continued in a more latent way: "He[93] felt that we had debated to topic to the end, which we sort of did . . . but there was a sort of resentment between us for the rest of the deployment."[94]

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[91] Interview with Leader B, Copgenhagen 2016.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Battlegroup commander.

[94] Interview with Leader 2, Copenhagen 2016.

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If anything, this case shows the importance of containment and processing of projection, a failure to do so by any leader only results in further regression in to the psychodynamic field with loss of focus on the main task as a result.

Overall, the empirical data highlighted by the cases in this section clearly shows that psychodynamic processes pertaining to projection is at work in the conflict field between the company and battlegroup level, as well as inside each level. It also shows a potential to influence the command relationship between the two levels of command if not properly contained. The empirical data also shows that projection is better contained and processed in units, in this case the company level, with deeper knowledge of each other, allowing the leader to understand and decipher the nuances in statements and opinions that show signs of projection.

Splitting

Individuals or organizations utilizing the defensive mechanism of splitting, are often characterized by being exposed to an extreme external pressure bordering an existential threat, and demonstrates this by behaviors, statements and opinions that split their worldview in black and white outcomes or create us and them relations. This is a natural coping strategy by the human psych in order to deal with harsh realities. It is expected that this process naturally will come in to play in the tension field between company and battlegroup level, if orders and directives from the battlegroup are perceived as inexpedient by subordinates. This process is further intensified by the extreme external pressure of combat were poor decision can lead directly to someone's death.

Leader 4 gave a clear example of splitting already beginning before deployment: "I was of the opinion that it would be optimal if we could get detached as much as possible from the battlegroup staff compromising team XXX, an opinion that I shared with the rest of the officers in the company command group."[95]

Leader 4 is here making it very clear, that he does not regard the battlegroup staff as being very competent, this view is further emphasized by the following remark:

> Don´t hire incompetent idiots to fill central positions within the staff. That will always lead to conflict, as the subunits are perfectly aware that their incompetence will increase the risk of getting someone wounded or killed, as well hinder our ability to gain results.[96]

Conferring to Hasselager´s theories on splitting this would be a clear case, where Leader 4 viewed his own unit as being competent in their ability to solve tasks, and battlegroup staff the exact opposite. In this case, Leader 4 even resorted to profanities when describing individuals in the staff. It is not up to this researcher to say whether or not there is any validity to Leader 4 accusations. This thesis only deals with the very obvious example of a leader clearly defining good and evil with the obvious potential for conflict down the road.

Leader 3 gave a different version of how he perceived splitting. Leader 3 was the company commander of a company attached to a battlegroup preparing for deployment, coming from a different regiment and attached very late in the process, only having three months to train with the battlegroup prior to deployment. In his perception, he and his company was passed over or ignored in many cases, among others because of lack of

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[95] Questionnaire from |Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 2.

[96] Ibid., paragraph 13.

personal relations with the battlegroup staff and commander. This estrangement was further reinforced by the fact that the company was geographically operating out of a different camp, than the one the battlegroup was placed in, making personal communication very difficult and infrequent, this is exemplified by the following: "The fact that my company wasn´t part of the original battalion forming the main part of the battlegroup, made it difficult for the staff to understand who we were and under which conditions we worked."[97]

Furthermore, this disproportion gave raise to splitting between the companies in the battlegroup as well: "Paradoxically it felt like all their[98] needs were always met before all others! Curiously the ones who were given nothing in terms of support, were given the bulk of the tasks, whereas the ones given the most, hardly solved any tasks at all"[99]

Leader 3 described how this was reinforced over time by the fact that he was left out of the information loop, not having access to the mission secret network from his forward operating base, were most of the battlegroup communication went on. This case highlights how splitting influences, not only the command relationship between company and battlegroup, but also between companies.

Another company commander gave a different perspective on splitting. He did not experience any splitting between the battlegroup and company, as he had a good personal

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[97] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

[98] Leader 3 referring to the two companies generic to the battalion that formed the core of the battlegroup.

[99] Questionnaire from Leader 3, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 7b.

relationship with several of the members of the staff prior to deployment.[100] He did however experience how his platoon commanders started to show signs of splitting between themselves and the battlegroup staff. Leader 2 described how he sees his platoon commanders going from having a nuanced and realistic view on the staff during training prior to deployment, to having a more biased, unnuanced and unrealistic views as the deployment progress and the external pressure mounted. Although this shift in perception could also be a function of poor boundary regulation on the company Commander´s part, it is an interesting observation that flows well with the introduction for this chapter on how platoons sometimes operate directly with individual battlegroup staff members. Leader 2 described his observation during deployment in this way: "then they sort of stress out and don't see the big picture, but more from their own narrow point of view. . . and then towards the end of the deployment when they have more experience and have seen more things, they once again become more nuanced in their views."[101]

This quote highlights how extreme external pressure can manifest itself through defensive mechanisms, in this case splitting, and how it can affect the command relationship in new ways, as a function of the changes to command structures during deployment. Furthermore, this case also highlights that splitting is less likely to happen when a personal relationship is established prior to deployment, as was the case between Leader 2 and the battlegroup staff, and when it is lacking as in the case of Leader 3 and

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[100] Interview with Leader 2, Copenhagen 2016.

[101] Ibid.

the platoon commanders in the above case, there is a higher likelihood of splitting, with degradation to the command relationship as a result.

Idealizing and Devaluation

This section takes a closer look at how the last of Hasselager defensive mechanisms influences the command relationship between the company and battlegroup level. As idealizing pertains to the context of this thesis, it would be expected that the empirical data would make references to how a source would feel that the involvement of or the mere presences of a leader or another individual would make or break the successfulness of a given task and eliminate all perceived problems, placing the sole responsibility for the completion of a task on that person. However, after closely examining and evaluating the empirical data, there is no evidence to support that idealizing has been a factor, or at least not a large enough factor, that any of the sources found it significant enough to mention any of the indicators. There could be several explanations for this absence, the most intermediate is that it simply did not happen. Geert Hofstede, a Dutch socio-psychologist renowned for his comprehensive studies on national values introducing the term national dimensions, might offer an explanation as to why idealizing is not present. Hofstede argued that the Danish people in general has a very low power distance relation,[102] meaning that superiors and subordinates consider each other to be colleagues and equals. Another trait is that subordinates are seldom afraid to disagree, and expect to be consulted before decisions are made, which all lead to

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[102] Geert Hofstede, *Kulturer og organisationer – Overlevelse I en grænseoverskridende verden* (Copenhagen: Handelshøjskolens Forlag, 1. udgave 2002), 45 table 2,1.

the fact, that it is not in Danish culture to idealize a leader or another individual in an organization. However, this discussion goes beyond the scope of this thesis and will not be considered further.

Another likely explanation is that the way the interviews and questionnaires were constructed somehow influenced the answers given, and did not give enough incentive for sources to talk about situations where idealizing was present, this would become a focus point for any future research into this subject.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence pertaining to idealizing a concept or an idea. In this case, it is the idea of combat, or more precisely being in contact with an actual enemy. Contact is a situation that has been rehearsed countless times during training, and although it is the hardest and most dangerous part of being a soldier, because of all the training it is also for many the very essence of being a soldier. Combat being a concept that is being idealized, is highlighted by Leader 1 talking about combat in the following quotes: "The more major combat like, the better it would be."[103] "There is an expectation of it happening, that is why we are here."[104]

However, during counter insurgency operations conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq, combat only accounts for a small part of the time spent on a deployment, indeed combat can be counterproductive to many tasks related to counter insurgency operations. Thus, there is a potential for conflict if the idealization of combat leads to units reverting from the main task. Leader 2 stressed it this way: "In those situations where they

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[103] Interview with Leader 1, Copenhagen 2016.

[104] Ibid.

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(platoons. Red) sought out direct combat, without clear orders to do so, was you know…
anyway it was not my intention for them to seek out combat situations, as this would not
help our cause."[105]

In this case, Leader 2 described how idealizing the idea of combat actually
jeopardizes the main task, and leads to platoons misunderstanding what the main task is,
this can be seen as a regression to the psychodynamic field, as Leader 2 described how
platoons were having a hard time dealing with the uncertainty of counter insurgency
operations, and as a result started idealizing what they knew and had trained for; combat
operations. This type of idealizing would certainly have a potential to develop to a state
of conflict and a beginning breakdown of the command relationship between the two
levels of command, with the battlegroup having one idea of the main task, and
subordinate units having a self-defined main task that contradicts the battlegroups.

With regards to devaluation Hasselager described this as being the opposite
defensive mechanism of idealizing. Where idealizing tries to remove focus on realities by
placing all hope in one person or an idea, devaluation focuses on blaming a person or an
idea for the combined anxieties of an organization. For the purpose of this thesis, it is
expected that cases of devaluation in the empirical data will show itself in assertions of
leader being week, incompetent or simply leaders losing faith in subordinates abilities to
solve tasks.[106]

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[105] Interview with Leader 2, Copenhagen 2016.

[106] Annemette Hasselager and Poula Jakobsen, *Den uduelige leder? En case om samarbejdsproblemer" i Psykodynamisk organisationspsykologi* (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel, 2004), 168.

Referring again to the mail correspondence used in previous cases, highlights an example of how a company feel they are being devalued by the battlegroup staff. In the correspondence, it is mentioned how the company feels that they increasingly are being micromanaged by the battlegroup staff, because the staff has lost faith in the company's ability to correctly report their readiness status on available units. From the perspective of the staff however, they feel that the company is not providing the information they need to mission task the company in a comprehensive way. This in turn is interpreted by the company as distrust in the company and that the staff feels the company is avoiding tasks on purpose by consequently reporting a lower readiness status.[107] Whether or not there is any validity to arguments by the staff, in this case makes no difference, the point is that it is the perception of the company that they are being devalued and problematized by the staff. Likewise, it would be relevant for this case to look deeper in to the staff mechanisms at work, as devaluation from the battlegroup side could be a subconscious defensive mechanism in order take focus away from own incompetence. However, this aspect could not be neither confirmed nor denied by the empirical data, it can therefore only be concluded that from the perspective of the company they are being devalued by the staff. In this particular case, it is the conclusion of this researcher, that this conflict could have been avoided if there had been a better command relationship between the two levels of command, which would have generated more trust in each other's abilities.

Devaluation from subordinates to higher unit is also present in the empirical data. In the words of Leader 4: "We (battlegroup staff. Red) are working on detaching you to

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[107] Mail correspondence, team X, Afghanistan year X, mail 2, 4, 6, 11.

Task Force Helmand . . . in return we get a British Infantry Company for our area of operation."[108] This quote is a representation by Leader 4 of a situation where he is being given an oral task by his battlegroup commander. Leader 4 response to the situation is quite clear from the following quote: "It sounded very good, however I did not believe that he had the ability to make it happen."[109]

When analyzing Leader 4´s general description of the situation from the point of view of devaluation, there is evidence to support that Leader 4 chooses to focus on the realities of the events in order to spare himself the disappointment of the detachment not actually coming true, and thereby devaluating the his superior. In the end however, the battlegroup commander does manage to get the detachment arranged, which leads to a conflict between the company and the battlegroup as the company commander did nothing to prepare his task, but chose instead to go with his devaluation believing that the assignment would not happen.

In summary, devaluation and idealizing are evident sources for potential conflicts between the company level and battlegroup level, with degradation of the command relationship as a consequence. It is however not, judging from the relative small number of indicators present in the empirical data, the most likely source of conflict.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In summary, it is apparent that Annemette Hasselager´s theories about defensive mechanisms as they relate to psychodynamic system theory can help to understand how

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[108] Questionnaire from Leader 4, Copenhagen 2016, paragraph 1 and 2.

[109] Ibid.

subconscious processes influence the command relationship between the two levels of command being analyzed in this thesis. In the above three sections, several cases have been identified were individuals or groups have regressed to the psychodynamic field as a result of defensive mechanisms being utilized, primarily to dampen organizational anxiety, with conflicts with other parts of the origination as a result. An inherent discourse of psychodynamic system theory is that processes takes place at the subconscious level, making it incredibly hard for leaders to identify when a specific defensive mechanism is at play. This inherent problem is evident throughout the empirical data as well, as there are very few examples of leader reacting comprehensively when faced with them, leading to a deepening of conflicts instead of defusing, degrading the command relationship as a result.

In conclusion, the above three sections have highlighted how the three main defensive mechanisms of projection, splitting and idealizing/devaluation have influenced the command relationship at the subconscious level in a number of ways.

Analysis of Wilfred Bion

The following three sections covers how the three group dynamics of fight or flight, dependency and pairing have influenced the command relationship between the company and battlegroup level. Wilfred Bion´s three mechanisms of group behavior give explanation to inter group dynamics and how they can be perceived by the surrounding organization, and how they potentially influence organizations to work either predominantly in the goal oriented field or the psychodynamic field. According to Bion, basic assumption groups, or groups working at the psychodynamic level, influenced by either of three mechanisms, are subconsciously being guided by those assumptions in

their behavior.[110] Because these assumptions are done at the subconscious level, these basic assumptions are also identified as regressive defensive mechanisms, that groups are utilizing as a defense against anxiety and to satisfy both the group and the individual needs. This behavior is expected to be the sources of potential conflict between the levels of command if this regression results in units loosing focus on the mail task.

Dependency

For organizations degrading to the basic assumption dependency it would be expected that units or members of units show signs of being totally depended on their superior's ability to make decisions for them, relying on them to make the right decisions to minimize own anxiety. With the responsibility for problem solving resting solely on the leadership, high levels of complacency from group members or subordinate leaders would be expected as well as indicators of dependency.

When going through the empirical data for this thesis, there is however very little evidence of those indicators being present, that would suggest dependency being a factor for potential conflicts or deterioration of the command relationship. Indeed, no indicators have been identified by this researcher that could be interpreted as dependency. As the mechanism of dependency is closely related to idealization, some of the reasons for not seeing any indicators in the empirical data pertaining to dependency might also be same. Particular the Danish culture with regards to power distance, might provide an explanation in this case as well. Additionally, the Danish Army, as many other armies as well, places great emphasis on Mission Command, utilizing effect terms and mission task

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[110] Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers,* 60.

verbs rather than giving specific orders to subunits.[111] Meaning that the commander of a unit will have to decide for himself how to solve a given task, having to decide himself serves a dual purpose, it does not only allow for faster and smoother exploitation of tactical opportunities, is also motivates leaders to take a least basic ownership for tasks, thus it becomes quite difficult for a leader to place sole responsibility for task solving on another leader or individual, becoming dependent on that person. However, the utilization of Mission Command as an mitigating instrument is only speculation on behalf of this researcher based on own experience, to verify whether or not mission command is an effective tool to minimize organizations reverting to a state of dependency would require a separate study to comprehensively answer.

<div align="center">Fight or Flight</div>

According to Wilfred Bion, the basic assumption of fight or flight is mechanism organization can regress to when faced with a perceived strong external threat, like the existential threat of combat, members of a group create strong internal bindings to address anxiety. The group as a whole will choose to either use the bindings to collectively fight the threat or flee from the threat.[112] Obviously during the deployment, there are numerous examples of organizations or units fighting manifested as actual combat against an insurgent enemy, this fight can in itself become the main purpose for an organization when regressing to the psychodynamic field, assuming that combat is not

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[111] Danish Defense Academy, *Feltreglement 1* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Defense Academy, May 2007), 1-8-3.

[112] Madsen, *Wilfred Bion gruppedynamik*, 4.

the main task. Cases hereof have been covered by the section pertaining to Bent Jørgensen´s problem solving leadership function. However, in the context of this thesis, focusing on how subconscious process influence the command relationship, the external threat that an organization is either fighting or fleeing from, would have to be a superior external organization. That external organization would have to put enough pressure on the subordinate unit for them to be perceived as the real enemy, pushing the subordinate unit into a state of regression choosing to either fight or flee from the external pressure provided by the superior unit. Nevertheless, as with the basic assumption of dependency there are no clear indicators that units have regressed to the basics assumption of fight or flight were the object of the struggle is the battlegroup staff or Task Force Helmand in terms of the battlegroup staff. Contrary to the mechanisms of dependency and idealizing, there seems to be only two likely explanations for the absence, either there is simply no process going on that would pertain to Bion´s theory on fight or flight, or the way the research was conducted did not facilitate the collection of empirical data to support Bion´s theories.

<div align="center">Pairing</div>

The final analysis in this chapter is founded on Wilfred Bion´s group dynamic theory on pairing. Pairing is a basic assumption organizations regressing to work predominantly in the psychodynamic field, can utilize to revert the focus from the anxiety of reality. Members of an organization do so by create a pair either with a new member entering the team, or with existing members in the hope that this new pair within the group, can break the stalemate and bring new energy to the group. Again, as with the two other basic assumptions that Bion works with, there are no clear indicators to found in the

empirical data, that pairing is an ongoing mechanism, much less that it would have any influence on the command relationship between the two levels of command.

Summary

In summary, the empirical data did not provide any cases, that could be directly linked to the three group dynamic behaviors defined by Wilfred Bion as basic assumptions, that would aid the understanding of the conflict spectra between company and battlegroup level. Neither dependency, fight/flight nor pairing process could be identified or interpreted through analysis of the empirical data utilizing the indicators defined in chapter 3. As a consequence, there are two possible conclusions to how the subconscious processes of dependency, fight or flight and pairing effect the command relationship. One conclusion is that there are no ongoing processes pertaining to Bion´s group dynamics, which influences the command relationship enough for sources to mention any of the indicators defined by Bion. This conclusion does however not mean that the group dynamic processes are not present, but simply that they do not exert enough influence over the command relationship to be noticeable by any of the sources. Thus, the subconscious process of dependency, fight or flight and pairing does not influence the command relationship between two levels of an organization.

Another conclusion to the missing indicators and cases in the empirical data could be that Bion´s theories on groups dynamics focuses more on internal group dynamics, as opposed to how the group interacts with the extremal environment. The sources used in this thesis are all leaders at different levels, that have been involved in conflicts in some way or another, and as such represents the organization the lead, they are however not necessarily good indicators for internal process inside the organization that they lead. If

this thesis was to include sources from the noncommissioned offers level and/or enlisted level, the results might have been different, and more cases might have been evident. It is however unlikely that it would have benefits to the focus of this thesis to include those sources, as this thesis in focused on how subconscious process effect the command relationship between two levels of command, meaning the relationship between leaders. It would however make for a very interesting branch research to try and identify how subconscious processes effect the internal workings of organizations exposed to the extreme external pressure of combat.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research thesis was to provide new insight to one of the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges pertaining to the breakdown of command relationship between two levels of command in a military organization deployed in hostile environments. The thesis has done so by focusing on how subconscious processes influenced the command relationship, and ultimately how those processes contributed to the spectra of conflicts between the company level and battlegroup level, and thus the breakdown of the command relationship. To that end, this thesis has utilized three different theories within psychodynamic system theory, presented in chapter 2, to analyze interviews and questionnaires to identify perceived problem areas within the subconscious domain and their effects on the command relationship.

The objective of the analysis depicted in chapter 4 was to answer the primary research question, applying the methodology and operational approach is described in chapter 3. In support of the primary research question, this thesis made use of three secondary research questions pertaining to the three different theoretical perspectives described in chapter 2. This was done in an effort to highlight different aspects of the primary research question. The three secondary research questions were answered in the summary section in chapter 4 for each of the three main theoretical approaches. Thus, it is the objective of chapter 5 to answer the primary research question: How do subconscious processes effect the command relationship between company and

battlegroup from a psychodynamic systems perspective during execution of combat operations?

In order to provide an understanding of how subconscious process effect the command relationship between two levels of command, in an effort to provide new insight to one of the Danish Armies warfighting challenges on the breakdown of command relationship during deployments.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Through the comprehensive analysis of the collected empirical data presented in chapter 4, this research thesis has been able to establish several cases, where subconscious processes contributed to conflicts between the company level and the battlegroup level, based on the three main psychodynamic system theories presented in chapter 2.

It was initially expected that the changes in the chain of command, made necessary by the requirement of the operational environment, would blur the boundary regulating function of the company commanders, potentially leading to conflicts between the company and battlegroup level. However, the analysis did not support this expectation, indeed it actually highlighted a focus on this leadership function by all parts. In the cases were the battlegroup staff took over parts of the boundary regulating functions from the company commander the results were generally positive, resulting in better command relations between the company and battlegroup level. So even though the role of boundary regulation is challenged by the changes to the organization and chain of command, it is the conclusion of this researcher that the continuous focus from both

levels of command on the role of boundary regulation, effectively mitigates the potential for conflict presented by the organizational changes.

With regards to pathological processes, it is quite remarkable that even though several cases show that a number of inexpedient procedures have been identified, no actions are taken to rectify them. Herein lies an obvious explanation and potential for conflict; when the battlegroup does not meet the operational needs of the companies, it becomes inherently easy for the companies to reject the battlegroup´s legitimacy, setting the stage for defensive mechanisms like projection and splitting. Another frequent source for conflict pertaining to pathological processes, is the company levels perception of the battlegroup staff and tactical operations center being incompetent, especially with regards to understanding the operational environment and conditions for the company level. Although incompetence might only be the perception of the company level, some members of the battlegroup level, shared the perception, referring to a lack of time for training staff procedures due to planning tasks. Specifically, it is described how authority to make decisions in the tactical operations center, was unclear prior to deployment, and thus also during deployment. Lack of perceived authority gives cause for the perception of incompetency and leads to units regressing to the psychodynamic field, most pronounced in the case were a platoon commander rejects orders given by the tactical operations center. Cases also highlighted that a greater knowledge and understanding of each other's working conditions, is a basis for mitigating potential conflicts from pathological process, as was the case with platoon commanders changing their opinions after having visited the tactical operations center during a critical situation with troops in contract. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that not dealing with problems in the

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subconscious domain like pathological processes; organizational changes, unclear authorities, units feeling disconnected, have the potential to lead to marked regressive reactions. However, evidence also suggests that increased understanding and personal relations mitigated the cause for conflict created by pathological process as well as splitting and projection.

Cases have also highlighted other causes for subconscious process to influence the command relationship. Units exposed to extreme external pressure, have in some cases regressed to forms of splitting and projection in relations to the battlegroup staff. This puts great pressure on the company commander having to contain and process the anxieties and worries of his soldiers, and amongst other, function as a filter to external organizations when addressing those problems to the battlegroup. Although the importance of this function is highlighted by several cases, it is perhaps most evident in mail correspondence case were platoon commanders bypassed the chain of command sending a mail directly to Army Staff, addressing their distrust in the battlegroup staff. The case clearly demonstrates how lack of containment or unclear containment, leads to an escalation of the conflict between the company and battle group level, resulting in a breakdown of command relations. As with boundary regulations and pathological process, evidence from the empirical data and cases also suggest the effects of defensive mechanism can be mitigated by personal relations. Relations across the two levels of command, seems to make it particularly difficult for units to regress projection or splitting mechanisms.

As stated in the introduction section for chapter 4, there is a profound lack of focus on the main task evident throughout the empirical data. Indeed, as several cases

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have highlighted there doesn't seem to be a clearly defined main task in any of the cases. This particular worrisome when adopting the perspective of psychodynamic system theory, as the main task is the epicenter for comprehensive task solving by organizations, giving them a clear purpose and direction to take. According to the theory, organizations with weak visualizations of the main task are more likely to predominantly work at in the psychodynamic field, as opposed to the goal oriented field. When directly asked, none of the sources could clearly identify a main task. With the main task being unclear at battlegroup level, sources describe how each team defined their own end states, independently from previous teams, and tried to operate in accordance with them during their deployment. This general lack of a clearly defined main task is evident throughout the two levels of command, with sources from the company level describing how they have to define their own main task for their soldiers, in order to motivate them and give them purpose. The analysis indicates that lacking a clearly defined and visualized main task has a marked potential to create conflicts between the two levels of command, with the consequent breakdown of command relationship. As both sources at the company level points out, and psychodynamic theory confirms, what is needed is a clear main task given to battlegroup prior to deployment that manages to put their task into context of both previous teams and upcoming teams.

In conclusion, the analysis of the empirical data presented in this research thesis has given an understanding of how subconscious processes influence command relations between two levels of command during deployment from a psychodynamic perspective. The research thesis as shown the leadership roles of boundary regulation, problem solving and pathological process have influenced the command relationship in a variety

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of ways. It has shown how splitting and projection have led to conflicts and subsequent breakdown of the command relationship. The thesis has showed that the subconscious processes pertaining to idealizing, devaluation, fight/flight, pairing and dependency apparently have very little influence on the command relationship although it is the recommendation of this researcher that further research be conducted to conclusively prove these findings. Overall this thesis has unmistakably shown that subconscious processes do play a role in the breakdown of command relationship, and thus have provided new insight to one the Danish Army´s warfighting challenges.

<u>Recommendations</u>

Following the conclusion of this thesis, this section will utilize the findings pertaining to how subconscious processes influence the command relationship, to give recommendations on how to mitigate some of the effects of those processes.

In terms of the main task, a focal point for psychodynamic system theory, findings suggest that an increased focus on visualizing the main task for deployed units is necessary, in order to provide a comprehensive overarching guidance for teams, capable of being operationalized to the lowest levels. It is the recommendation of this researcher that the Army Staff develops a comprehensive way of clearly visualizing a main task for each team, and how it nests with both previous and upcoming teams, to give a sense of purpose that stretches beyond the one team's deployment. At the battlegroup level, it is recommended to maintain focus on the main task and how sub tasks relate to it throughout the deployment, to facilitate visualization and focus on the main task as the deployment progresses. Focusing on this relation would mitigate several of the cases were an unclear main task was a cause of conflicts.

In numerous cases, the personal relationship between leaders have proven to play an important role in preventing units from regressing to the psychodynamic field. Likewise a better understanding, knowledge and respect for each other working conditions an environment have proven to mitigate effects of subconscious processes. The current force generation model for deployments, has units being attached very late to the battlegroup they are assigned to, in some cases less than one month prior to deployment. It is therefore the recommendation of this researcher to task organize the entire battlegroup earlier during the training phase, than is currently customary. Having the whole battlegroup gathered 6 month before deployment, would give ample time for all leaders of the battlegroup to develop a personal relationship with each other, thereby mitigating some of the effects of defensive mechanisms like projection and splitting. Continuously having focus on the relationship during deployment is deemed a prudent measure as well, the battlegroup staff should consider visiting the subunits that are operating out of other bases than the battlegroup, to keep up the personal relations and general knowledge of the conditions subunits operate under.

A further recommendation pertaining to pathological processes is focusing on training both the staff and the tactical operations center prior to deployment. The company level describes how they perceive both the staff and the tactical operations center as being incompetent, with the subsequent effect described in cases in chapter 4. This perception of incompetency is further highlighted by leading staff members also describing the lack of training. It is therefore recommended that the staff take time away from routine planning to generate own training opportunities. Time for own training at the Battlegroup staff level would serve a twofold objective; increase competency in all

staff members, and expose weak links that may need to be substituted or reassigned prior to deployment. It is also recommended that this training is integrated with company level training, to raise awareness of each other's working conditions and generate trust between the levels of command. To that end, having platoon commanders visit the tactical operations center during executions of operations would be a comprehensive training objective, to mitigate the effects highlighted in chapter 4.

In summary, it is recommended that:

1. The Army Staff provides a clear and comprehensive main task to teams being deployed, linking the main tasks of several teams, to give a sense of continuation.

2. Establish the final organizational layout six months prior to deployment to facilitate personal relations between leaders at all levels.

3. Battlegroups staff focus on maintaining command relations by frequent visits at sub unit locations.

4. Battlegroup staff generate time for their own training.

5. Leaders at company and battlegroup level become acquainted with psychodynamic system theories of Bent Jørgensen and Annemette Hasselager pertaining primarily to leadership functions and defensive mechanisms.

<u>Perspectives and Future Research</u>

During the research for this thesis, several areas of research was on purpose eliminated for the purpose of focusing the research to a narrow aspect of the warfighting challenges that was answered. However, there were other aspects of the areas eliminated

that would make for a very interesting research on its own. The following are recommendations for future research covering those areas:

It would be interesting to expand the field of the research to include multinational units. This research would have two purposes. First to establish if the same process influence the command relationship in units with other nationalities than Danish. Secondly, and perhaps more interesting, would be to look at how the psychodynamic process covered in this thesis influence the command relationship in multinational units, were different cultures may play a role as well, specially pertaining to defensive mechanism. In the context of this thesis, the battlegroups interview where subordinate to a British brigade. A research focusing on the command relationship between those two levels of command might provide some very interesting insights as well.

Another interesting focus would be to revisit the missing indicators for Wilfred Bion´s theories to make a more comprehensive conclusion to whether or not they do not play a role in the breakdown of the command relationship. Revisiting Bion´s theories on group dynamics would also allow for a focus oriented more toward internal group dynamics, looking more a subconscious process within an organization.

Finally, this thesis has focused exclusively on the leadership perspective, with all sources being officers. Including sources from the noncommissioned officers level or enlisted levels, might provide new insights and aspects that were not covered by officer sources utilized in this thesis.

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All interviews were confidential; the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

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